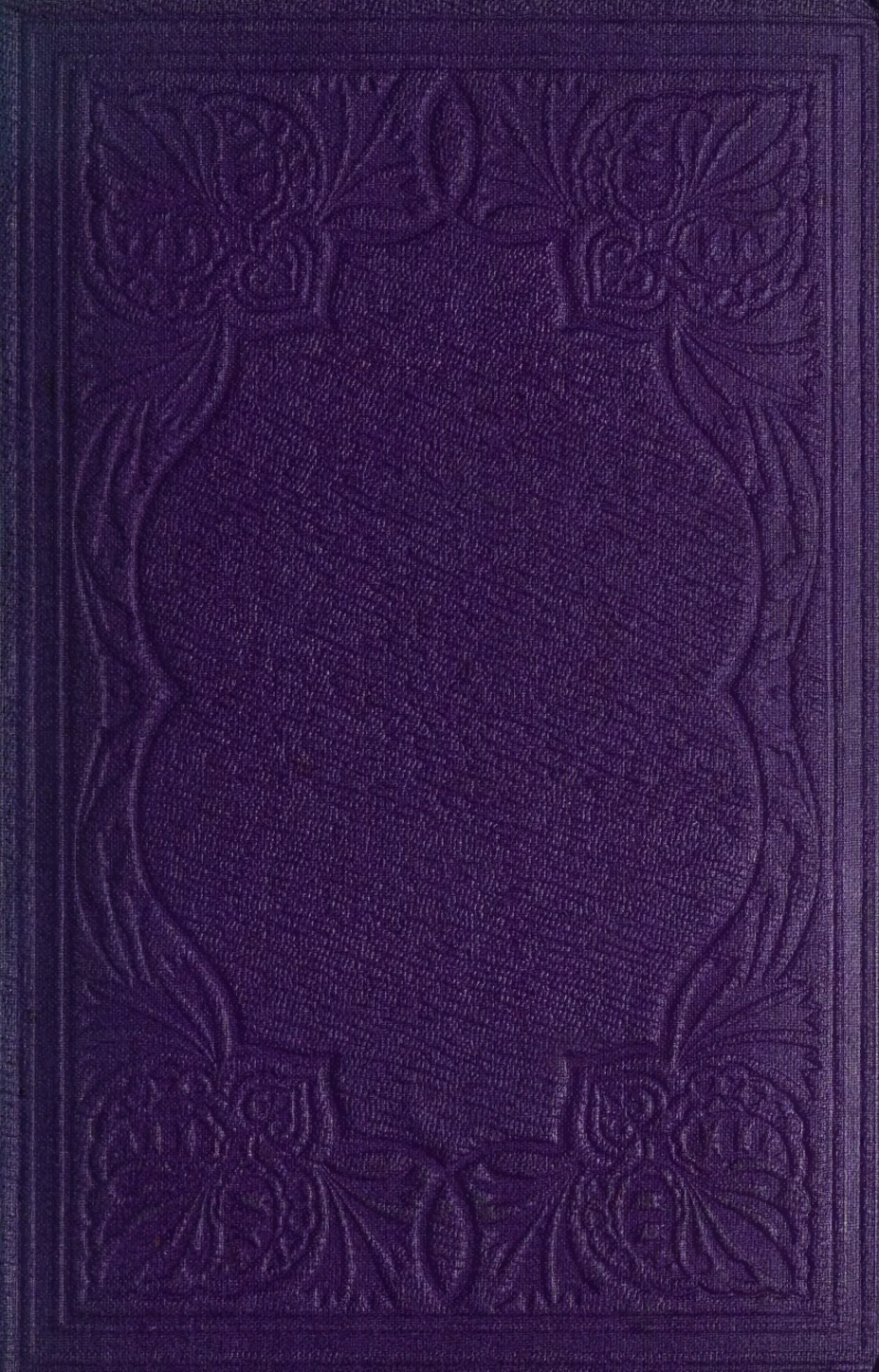
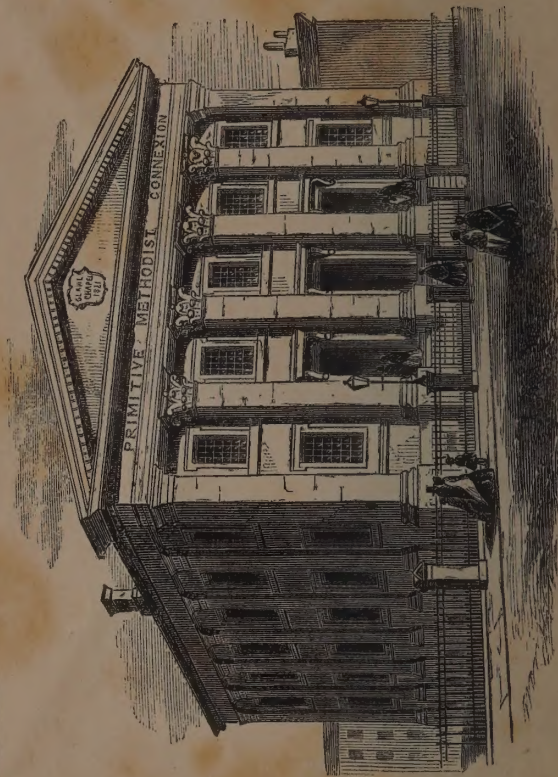




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DEVOTIONAL CHRISTIANITY,

AND ITS ADMIRABLE ADAPTATION TO

PROMOTE THE SALVATION OF MANKIND,

BY

WILLIAM GARNER,

PRIMITIVE METHODIST MINISTER;

AUTHOR OF "THE CANDIDATE FOR HEAVEN," "THE GOOD OLD WAY,"

"JUBILEE OF ENGLISH CAMP-MEETINGS," "DIALOGUES," ETC.

"Therefore ye shall keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein. I am the Lord your God."—Lev. xviii. 30.

"The only way to be preserved from all false worship is seriously to consider and devoutly to observe the ordinances of the true religion. He, who in the things of God goes no further than he can say. Thus it is written, and thus it behoves me to do, is never likely to receive a false creed, nor perform a superstitious act of worship."—*Dr. A. Clarke.*

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P R E F A C E.

1. ABOUT twelve years ago England was suddenly thrown into a state of extraordinary religious excitement by what was conventionally designated "The Popish Aggression." While we had no wish to deny liberty of conscience to any orderly class of our fellow-subjects, we believed that Christians would most effectually promote the real and permanent interests of their country, by offering a scriptural opposition to the arrogant and destructive inroads of papal superstition. We believed also that in the Primitive Methodist Community there was a serious lack of denominational literature well adapted to the critical times passing over us. Influenced by these weighty considerations we projected a work, the designed character of which, suggested the following title: *A Systematic Compendium of Religious Instruction*. After I had made considerable progress in the work I learned that my Brother James was engaged in a similar undertaking. As we were anxious to avoid interfering with each other's plans, we agreed that he should turn his special attention to the doctrinal part of the scheme while I confined my labours chiefly to the devotional part. My brother's work has been before the public some time, and has been honoured

with a very favourable reception, both by the religious press generally, and the denomination for whose special benefit it was published.

As I have had a very large share of Connexional work to perform, which had no immediate connection with my own stations, and my attention has been repeatedly given to the publication of several smaller works which, to my own mind, passing events seemed to require, the completion of this volume has been greatly retarded; though I am not aware that its delay has occasioned any depreciation in its real value. Special care has been taken to give preponderance to those subjects which are acknowledged by evangelical churches to be of vital importance; while love-feasts and class-meetings, which are almost peculiar to the several Methodist communities, have received the attention to which, in a work like this, the author considers them entitled. And he earnestly hopes that the volume, as an elementary class-book will be found both acceptable and useful to the office-bearers of the Primitive Methodist Denomination, and to those especially whose position in the Church of Christ requires them to conduct public worship, and to communicate to their fellow-men religious instruction. Of one thing the author is certain: and that is, a book similar to this would have been of great advantage to him in the days of his youth, and in the earlier years of his ministry.

What is advanced on Baptism includes several extracts from two pamphlets the Author published many years ago; but which are now out of print. The Chapter, too, on

union with the Christian Church, embraces several paragraphs which are printed in his widely circulated *Candidate for Heaven Invited to Christian Fellowship*. In preparing this volume for publication material assistance has been derived from numerous authors, which is acknowledged in the usual forms. Copious Indexes have been provided at the head of each chapter, which we trust, will be found a great convenience to the reader.

2. It is the duty of Christian Ministers to communicate instruction to their fellow-men through the medium of the press, as well as from the pulpit, in their pastoral visits and ordinary intercourse with society. It is no less the duty and privilege of Churches to encourage literary labours adapted to the necessities of the times. If men of God neglect to avail themselves of this very ready medium of communicating and receiving instruction for the purposes of diffusing sound philosophy, beneficial science, and evangelical truth, men of the world will monopolise and employ it in the cause of sin. This they are now doing to a fearful extent. "Nearly thirty millions of copies of antichristian publications appear annually in London alone." (*Power of the Press* p. 15). Observe, in London, the Metropolis of a great and highly enlightened Protestant nation. "Tell it not in Gath : publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised Philistines triumph." To assist in precipitating the deadly poison constantly exhaling from these pestiferous productions, the Churches of Christ should send forth incessantly the most powerful disinfectants,

both through the living voice and the silent press. If voice is gorgeously arrayed in the most fascinating drapery of language, and profusely decorated by the skilful artist, let Religion be clothed in her spotless robes of righteousness ; and let the pen of the ready scribe and the style of the engraver combine to portray her heavenly charms to a gazing and confounded world. "The masses must have food, and in the absence of what is good and healthful, they will take up with what they can find. Ought not true philanthropy to help them to a proper supply?"

3. If the press is powerful for evil, it is equally powerful for good. Accordingly it has been a terror to the wicked ever since the invention of printing. "It was a wise saying of the popish bishops in the time of Queen Mary : *If we do not put down this PRINTING it will put us down.* They laboured to *put down the printing*, but they could not ; and under God the printing, by exposing the wickedness of their doctrine and practices, and especially by multiplying copies of the NEW TESTAMENT, did most effectually *put down them*". (Dr. A. Clarke, on Acts v. 40). Without controversy, a judicious use of the press is one of the most efficient breakwaters against the proud and swelling billows of antichrist.

4. Had Christian men not written for the propagation and defence of the truth, as well as proclaimed the Gospel from the pulpit, it would have been an incalculable loss to mankind. A useful author, being dead, yet speaketh to succeeding generations. The lights which he has kindled by the press, may illumine the path of many a be-

wildered traveller through this dreary wilderness, when his tongue

“Lies silent in the grave.”

“What would have been the state and character of our Christian literature, if all the men of God before us had thought and laboured exclusively for their own immediate congregations—if they had contented themselves with doing nothing but preaching repentance and faith? How much would the Church of Christ have lost by such a narrow-minded suicidal policy. . . . The same arguments which call for higher, and wider, and more diversified, and more earnest work in the pulpit, call equally loud for the use of the press in behalf of the same subject.”*

5. When a person contemplates preparing a work for the press, reason suggests that he should first inquire what branch of instruction is most needed in that sphere in which his literary productions are most likely to be chiefly circulated, whether he be creditably qualified to supply the desideratum, and whether he possess the means of carrying out his plan, without the risk of involving either himself or his creditors in difficulty. If he can answer these interrogations satisfactorily, then let him proceed in the name of the Lord. The author of this volume undertook the task *principally* with a view to instruct and benefit the congregations of his own community, under an impression that among them a work of this kind was greatly needed, and, if judiciously prepared, would be appreciated and useful to the parties for whose spiritual welfare it might be published.

* W. A. Scott, D.D., New Orleans.

6. Great care has been taken throughout the volume, not to attach, even to the divinely-appointed means of grace, an efficacy which is not attributed to them by the word of God. If we mistake not, one of the grand errors of the day, in our beloved country, is in superstitiously ascribing to gospel ordinances an unscriptural influence. While sceptics ignore the means of grace as utterly useless, the fanatical and superstitious invest them with miraculous powers. Against these two extremes we are anxious to guard the reader. A pious and discreet use of the means of grace is the clearest manifestation of true wisdom. "We ought," says John Bradford, "to be very careful neither on one hand to slight or neglect the *external institutions* of our religion, nor on the other hand to depend upon our compliance with them, unless we at the same time answer their *end* and *design*. This, therefore, should be our care, to reverence all the institutions of our Lord, and to use them faithfully and diligently; but, at the same time, never to content ourselves till we find the Spirit of God and of Christ dwelling in us, and becoming a settled principle of piety and virtue to us through the course of our lives." Creeds, however excellent and true; ecclesiastical organizations, complete and powerful as they may seem; pulpits, vast as is the good which they accomplish, and admirably adapted as they are to popular instruction; and sacraments, useful as they are as "schoolmasters to bring us to Christ," are but the scaffolding of genuine Christianity. Of themselves they are powerless—wells without water, clouds without rain.

When "Naaman, the Syrian, dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." But the healing virtue was not in that celebrated stream. In itself the Jordan was no more a sovereign and an instantaneous remedy for the leprosy than were "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus." The cure was effected by the hand of God. It is the same divine hand which connects a saving efficacy with the institutions of the gospel.

7. God will savingly bless those who make a proper use of His own appointed means of grace. His promises are conditional, whether or not conditions are specified. In some cases they are clearly expressed; in others, they are only implied. The inestimable blessings of saving grace and final salvation are suspended on definite terms. If the stipulated conditions be observed, pardon and salvation are bestowed; if neglected, they are withheld. How vastly important, therefore, it is for us to know what are God's appointed means of grace, and how He would have us use them, in order to our salvation. These vital points are attentively considered in the following pages of this work. That God should not crown with His blessings those who rightly use His own ordained instrumentalities of salvation is incredible. His perfect righteousness cannot admit of His betraying that trust, and blighting those hopes which He Himself has so plainly encouraged. To the efficacy of the means of grace, when they are employed as they ought to be, His living oracles and the history of the church bear the clearest and the strongest testimony.

(1.) The Holy Scriptures are represented to us, as possessing a Divine fitness and energy to meet the spiritual wants of man. If the abstract word is a dead letter, clothed with the unction of the Holy Ghost, it is spirit and life. According to St. Paul, "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. i. 16. "Receive," says St. James, "with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." i. 18. "Ye shall know the truth," says Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." The Scriptures too are instrumental in effecting the holiness of believers. Listen to the prayer of Christ: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

(2.) The preaching of the gospel is blessed to the salvation of those who hear the word of God and keep it. Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word. The proclamation of evangelical doctrine is a means of spiritual regeneration. "I have begotten you," says the apostle Paul, "through the Gospel." I. Cor. iv. 15.

(3.) Blessings are granted in answer to prayer. According to some writers, who call themselves Christian divines, the only effect of prayer is, a reflex influence exerted on ourselves. Was this the only influence which was exerted by the prayers of Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, and the apostles? It was not. Prayer was to them a channel through which God communicated blessings both to themselves and to others, in whose behalf they interceded. As God commands us to pray to Him, He certainly wishes us to believe that He *regards* our prayers. For

how could it be possible for us to pray sincerely and earnestly, provided we believe that He bestows no blessing in answer to prayer, which He would not have conferred *without* prayer? Whatever infidelity or a spurious Christianity may insinuate to the contrary, we have the fullest evidence that "the Lord is near to all that call upon him in truth." Psalm cxlv. 18. Therefore,

8. With what gratitude and diligence ought we to apply ourselves to those means of grace which God has mercifully instituted for our salvation! With what cheerfulness and assiduity ought we to redeem the time, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. With what confidence and holy satisfaction should we search the Scriptures, attend the services of the sanctuary, pray to our heavenly Father in secret, and worship Him at the domestic altar. We now commend the work to God, and pray that it may be instrumental in leading multitudes to the everlasting fountains of living water.

THE AUTHOR.

DEVOTIONAL CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

GOD IS THE EXCLUSIVE OBJECT OF RATIONAL WORSHIP.

1. In what true devotion consists. 2. The supreme test is the word of God. 3. Circumstances which are undetermined by the Holy Scriptures may be settled by conventional authority. 4. The carnal mind opposed to simple and spiritual worship. 5. Heathen nations adore gods many and lords many. 6. The ancient idolatry of Great Britain. 7 Popery introduced in 596 A.D. by Augustine, under Gregory the Great. 8. Saintolatry and relicism prevalent in the Church of Rome. 9. Origen, the founder of saintolatry. 10. Gregory the Great, a zealous advocate for saintolatry. 11. The revival of superstition and relicism. 12. Transubstantiation, another branch of idolatry, introduced by Pope Innocent III. in the thirteenth century. 13. The Reformation. 14. England's exalted privileges under Protestant sway. 15. Strong delusions a fearful punishment. 16. Wafer-worshippers dread the Bible.

"For thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God."—Exod. xxxiv. 14.

1. BEFORE we proceed to notice the obligations, privileges, and responsibilities which are associated with religious worship, it is expedient to point out in what this holy exercise consists. On this vital question, there is, in the Churches of Christ, no trifling diversity of opinion. Rites and ceremonies, which are revered as indispensable parts of public devotion by one community, are regarded as

superstitious and unprofitable by another community. It behoves us, therefore, to express our own sentiments in a tone of moderation, and with becoming deference to the opinions of those who conscientiously dissent from that established order of worship to which we ourselves give preference.

At the same time it is necessary to forewarn our readers, that we cannot feel ourselves bound to regulate the mode of our worship, any more than to select the object of our worship, by any human authority, however respectable that authority may be. Once admit that man has a right first to devise, then to prescribe, the manner in which you must worship God, and that moment, by this blind admission, your religious liberty is forfeited. Let the formularies of ancient Churches, the authority of the fathers, and the wisdom and experience of modern teachers of Christianity be honoured with all the confidence and respect to which they are entitled; but call no man on earth father.

2. On every question which concerns the well-being of your soul, stand up firmly for the supremacy of the scriptures. But, to prevent any misapprehension on the subject, it may be necessary to remark, that there is an essential difference between religious duties which are absolutely enjoined by the word of God, and mere circumstantials, which are left undetermined by the same authority. The moral precepts of God are binding on every human conscience to which they are made known; and no council, or synod, or conference, or individual church, has a right to add anything to these precepts, or take anything from them, or to modify them in the slightest degree. "The law of the Lord is perfect." And thus saith the Lord, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." Consequently,

the forms of worship which God hath instituted, or concerning which He hath given directions with evident indications of approval, cannot be treated with neglect without incurring a fearful responsibility.

3. But, if we mistake not, certain arrangements connected with congregational worship, which are not specified in the scriptures, may be made and observed lawfully by conventional authority, provided always that such arrangements are not at variance with the Christian ritual, as laid down in the New Testament. Some good men may think they discover in this inspired volume a perfect ecclesiastical constitution—a complete form of church government, and a stereotyped mode of public devotion; but, for my part, I only perceive the great outlines, which the churches may legitimately fill up, as time and circumstances may suggest, provided they invariably take care that every stroke of their pencil harmonizes with the simple, spiritual, and original draught. In the New Testament, I read of the primitive disciples of Christ assembling for religious purposes, sometimes in the temple, at other times in the synagogues; now in private houses, then in the open air; to-day in school-houses, to-morrow in upper rooms; some of their holy exercises were short, others were of considerable length, and, occasionally, continued all night till break of day. In these divine services the disciples read the scriptures, preached, prayed, celebrated the Lord's supper, and sang "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." But precisely how they conducted their public religious duties, we are not informed in the word of God.

4. Now, as the carnal mind is naturally inclined to artificial pomp and ceremony, and as vast numbers of the clergy in the dark ages were entire strangers to experimental religion, and not a few of them grossly destitute of Biblical

knowledge, they regarded a mode of worship, whose principal elements are "spirit and truth," with feelings of aversion and disgust. And had they not been retained in holy orders by the secret magnetism of selfishness, many of them would have undoubtedly thrown aside their clerical costume, and devoted their lives to secular vocations. But they were avaricious, vain, and aspiring. And they found it much easier to gratify their sordid inclinations in the ranks of the clergy than in those of the laity. But their sacred office bound them to study, to teach, and to practise the simple and spiritual worship of the gospel. How could they get rid of this irksome task? And how could they invent a ritual in accordance with their unsanctified wishes, and with the desires of others who were like-minded with themselves, and at the same time keep up the title and resemblance of Christian ministers? They agreed in council to discontinue usages which bear the impress of Divine authority. They severely taxed their ingenuity, and invented fantastical robes, elaborate music, ridiculous gesticulations, and a liturgy in an unknown tongue. They builded magnificent temples, and decorated them in the highest style of architecture, though not always with a becoming regard to decorum. In a word, they studied to exhibit a ritual which was calculated rather to compliment and flatter than to reprove and correct the degenerate hearts of the ungodly. And even now, were we to enter their gorgeous temples, during the celebration of their "will worship," we should require other information than that furnished by the character of the service to assure us that we formed part of a Christian congregation. We have no inclination to misrepresent, or to hold up to ridicule, the devotion of any community, or period of the Church's history; but when the rulers of any church take

away the key of knowledge from the people, and corrupt the worship of God by ritual pomps and vanities, it becomes an imperative duty to apprise simple and unsuspecting souls of these perilous innovations, just as an experienced navigator lays down on his chart the shoals and sunken rocks which threaten the destruction of those vessels which venture to approach them. Having made these few preliminary remarks, we repeat the proposition which stands at the head of this chapter.

GOD IS THE EXCLUSIVE OBJECT OF RATIONAL WORSHIP.

5. *Nations which are unenlightened by revelation acknowledge and adore gods many and lords many.*—But who and what are their deities? They are the mere creations of poetry, fabulous history, superstition, and priestcraft. Among the millions of objects which the benighted heathen worship, there is no true and living God. When they offer sacrifice, there is no God to accept the offering as a sweet smelling savour. When they perform exhausting pilgrimages, there is no God to commend their toil. When they throw themselves beneath the crushing wheels of Juggernaut, there is no God to reward the bloody deed. When they pray, there is no ear to listen, no eye to see, no hand to help, no heart to feel. Throughout the realm of heathendom, delusion, crime, and misery reign triumphant, and Jehovah is “an unknown God.”

6. Such was once the condition of Great Britain. Idolatry bore sway, and the priests of Druidism ruled the nation with a rod of iron. But God, in his infinite mercy, made known His salvation openly in the sight of our progenitors. Revealed Truth visited our shores, and venerated error fled at its approach. God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” A voice from heaven was heard, saying, “I am God, and besides me there is none else.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The glorious announcement was believed, and the reasonable command obeyed. Ancient idols were abandoned, their horrid sacrifices were discontinued, their rude altars were overthrown, and the pure, rational worship of the one true and living God was firmly established in the land. The sun, the moon, Tuesco, Woden, Thor, Friga, Saturn, with all their kindred gods and demigods, fell, like mystic Babylon, to rise no more. From every Christian sanctuary a proclamation was sent forth, saying, "Hear, O Britain, Jehovah, our Elohim is ONE Jehovah." Polytheism appeared to have received its mortal wound, the unity of the Godhead was acknowledged, and our fathers became, nominally at least, a Christian people.

This glorious work was probably commenced late in the first, or early in the second, century of the Christian era, by genuine evangelical missionaries, and completed by the destruction of the last British idol at Goodmanham, Yorkshire, about A.D., 625, under the reign of Edwin the Great.

7. But the only God was not long honoured with exclusive homage. In A.D., 596, Gregory the Great sent Augustine with a staff of forty subaltern agents as missionaries to Britain. The ambitious monk soon contrived to amalgamate the Christian Churches with his party, and to get himself proclaimed chief or primate of all the country; and he was accordingly enthroned as the first Archbishop of Canterbury. The admission of this capital error into the constitution of the Christian Church opened the flood-gates of doctrinal and devotional error. Brilliant gospel truths were soon obscured by human tradition and perversion, and the pure worship of one God was corrupted by pageantry, relicism, and saintolatry.

8. In the Church of Rome, *saintolatry*, or saint-worship, is practised extensively with pontifical sanction. The creed of Pope Pius IV. affirms, "That the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and invoked, that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated."* But how did the pope know that glorified saints intercede for mankind on earth? Who told him that their cast-off raiment or dry bones are entitled to religious veneration? Or on what authority does he affirm that the sainted spirits of the just are to be "honoured and invoked?" We must be careful not to confound the fancies of a fellow-mortal with the commands of God. On the same subject the council of Trent decrees as follows: "The holy council commands all bishops and others, who have the care and charge of teaching, that according to the practice of the Catholic and apostolic Church, received from the beginning of the Christian religion, the consent of venerable fathers, and the decrees of holy councils, they labour with diligent assiduity to instruct the faithful concerning the invocation and intercession of the saints, the honour due to relics, and the lawful use of images; teaching them that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer their prayers to God for men; that it is a good and a useful thing suppliantly to invoke them, and to flee to their prayers, help, and assistance; because of the benefits bestowed by God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our only Redeemer and Saviour; and that those are men of impious sentiments who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who affirm that they do not pray for men, or that to beseech them to pray for us is idolatry; or that it is contrary to the word of God, and opposed to the

* Faiths of the World, Art. Saintworship.

honour of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man; or that it is foolish to supplicate, verbally or mentally, those who reign in heaven." * Notwithstanding the decrees and censures of popes and councils in favour of saint-worship, we hesitate not to affirm, that this practice in the Church of Rome is as real idolatry as Buddhism and Confucism are among the Hindoos and Chinese. And it is much of the same nature, being religious worship offered to dead men!

9. Origen, who flourished in the third century, and who was, in some respects, a notoriously weak expositor of the sacred scriptures, was the first man who publicly taught that peculiar efficacy was to be attached to the intercession of martyrs and saints. The new-fangled doctrine "spread so rapidly, that, in a short time, men chose their patron saints, and dedicated churches to their worship! During the sixth century, an incredible number of temples were erected in honour of the saints, both in the eastern and the western provinces; and numerous festivals were instituted to keep up the remembrance of reputedly holy men." Thus the idolatrous practice of invoking the saints, and imploring the benefit of their intercession, acquired a firm establishment among men infected with superstitious notions. But even the lowest grade of religious homage offered to a creature of the highest order, is irreconcilable with the plainest prohibitory law of our Creator. Indeed, if it were lawful to render an inferior kind or degree of religious worship to saints and angels, it would be a very difficult task to know precisely how far to proceed in this direction, and exactly where to stop. The common people, especially, would be subjected to serious perplexity.

10. About the close of the sixth century, "Pope Gregory

* Faiths of the World, Art. Saintworship.

the Great appointed litanies to be used in churches, in which saints were invoked by name;" and, from the eighth century, saint-worship was a recognised feature of devotion in the Church of Rome, and remains such at this day. In the *Confiteor*, sin is confessed not only to God, but to angels and saints in these words: "I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed." In this act of confession, angels and saints are associated by name with Almighty God, and precisely the same terms are employed in addressing mere creatures as are used in confession to the Creator. Consequently, if in this religious act equal worship be not offered to the Creator and the creature, by what rule is it determined what kind or proportion of worship is offered to each party? The only safe and common-sense way of avoiding idolatry is to adhere steadfastly to the Bible; neither to bow down nor pray to any created object; but to worship God, and Him only serve. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Exod. xx. 4, 5. Rival objects of devotion were openly proclaimed by the ministers of religion, and polytheism was revived, under a new form, to dishonour God and curse the land. Milner is of opinion that the missionaries from Rome preached a purer gospel than that which was promulgated by the British ministers; but we doubt the correctness of his views on this subject. According to Mosheim, "the western churches were loaded with rites by Gregory the Great, who had a marvellous fecundity of

genius in inventing, and an irresistible force of eloquence in recommending, superstitious observances. Nor will this be surprising to those who know that in the opinion of this pontiff, the words of the sacred writings were images of mysterious and invisible things; for such as embrace this chimerical system will easily be led to express all the doctrines and precepts of religion by external rites and symbols." The views of Mosheim are corroborated by Timpson, the British ecclesiastical historian. He says, Bertha, the first British queen who embraced Christianity, "lived to witness the progress of the gospel among the people: not only the formal abandonment of long-cherished idolatry by multitudes, but, notwithstanding various senseless ceremonies that had been introduced by Augustine from Rome, and which had deformed and corrupted the pure institutions of Christianity, a large number, it is concluded, received the doctrine of salvation, believing on the Son of God, and so became, with the queen herself, heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

11. Screened by the thick darkness which enveloped Christendom in the ninth century, a superstitious and designing priesthood collected an immense quantity of timber, old clothes, dead bodies, shrivelled limbs, dry bones, &c, and encouraged their ill-instructed and stupid flocks to regard this vile trumpery with idolatrous veneration. Holy relics, as these piles of lumber and trophies of death were improperly called, were converted into articles of merchandise, and became a fruitful source of unrighteous gain to the clergy, and of profound delusion to the people. Relics were more ardently sought after, and more confidently relied on, than God. And while fraud expatiated on their miraculous powers, and offered them for sale at extravagant prices, ignorance bought them up with an

eagerness which is rarely witnessed in the ordinary emporiums of trade.

Many of those commodities were apocryphal, others were counterfeit, but were, notwithstanding, warranted and sold as genuine articles by the unprincipled merchants. These transactions, even in the light of commerce, were enormous crimes, and constituted a regular system of swindling. But the climax of guilt lay in teaching their customers to believe that these Babylonian wares would, somehow or other, confer blessings on their possessors, which none but God can bestow. Here lies the cardinal sin of relicism. By these "lying wonders," millions of our forefathers were induced to associate, in their religious exercises, the legitimate property of the grave and the dunghill with the Holy One of Israel.

12. *Transubstantiation, another branch of idolatry, was introduced into the Christian Church, in the thirteenth century, by Pope Innocent III.* By the fabrication of this corrupt tenet, although the unity of God was confessionally acknowledged, it was doctrinally and practically denied. As often as a wafer was pronounced to be God, so often was a new idol set up. And as often as that wafer was worshipped, so often was an act of idolatry committed. Who then can estimate the number of idols, or the amount of idolatry that was practised, under the widely-spread, and undisturbed reign of Popery?

On the Romish side of this controversy, some of its champions have contended that, as the worship founded on the doctrine of transubstantiation has God for its object, provided He is not in the consecrated wafer, the mistake, after all, is not so serious a matter as Protestants represent it to be; but that it is merely an error in place; or, that God is worshipped where He is not. To this

sophism, for it does not deserve the name of an argument, we reply, once admit the principle that it is lawful to worship God, in any circumstances, under a material form, and you at once afford ample scope for the most absurd adventures of fanaticism, superstition, and presumption. Men whose reasoning powers are but feeble, and whose imaginations are strong, may easily persuade themselves, or be persuaded by superior minds, that God is in everything, in a sense which would justify their contemplating all objects indifferently, with a sort of religious veneration. And by the same false mode of theorizing, they could make rapid proficiency in the rule of retrogression, and finally settle down in pantheism. There is no effectual remedy for idolatry where it exists, or preventive against its intrusion, where it is not, but a firm adherence to the instruction of the Bible. And to set us right, and keep us right on this vital point, God wrote with His own finger on the first table of the law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them" (Exod xx. 3—5.) In defiance of these plain and positive commands, popery filled the Christian world with idols, in imitation of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

13. Such was the corrupt state of the British Church before she was purged by the glorious Reformation. Henry VIII, as a resolute, bigoted Papist, ascended the throne in 1509. The light of the Reformation had been kindled in various parts of continental Europe, the long and dismal eclipse was passing off, and the moral heavens were gradually brightening. In this return of gospel day,

the British isles had the happiness to share. Popish idolatry was attacked, and its impiety exposed, by able champions of truth. Henry entered the controversial arena, and fought manfully on the side of Rome; and so delighted was the Pope with the exploits of his valiant and dutiful son, that he rewarded him with the dignified title of "Defender of the Faith." By "the faith," of course his Holiness meant popery. But not many revolutions of seasons had passed before the monarch and the pontiff appeared in the field, engaged in a personal conflict. The point of dispute was one which touched the sovereign in the animal part of his nature. The pope was firm, and Henry was equally so, and as he was "given to change," and could not brook contradiction, and would not mortify his depraved inclinations, the royal "Defender" suddenly turned round, asserted his independence, and set the Pope at defiance. The Reformers wisely took advantage of this quarrel, and prosecuted their glorious work with such vigour and success that Romish idolatry was overthrown, and throughout the length and breadth of the land, God, and God only, was once more the object of Christian worship. Thus God made the wrath of man to praise Him. Who would have dreamed that, when the haughty, turbulent, and licentious monarch was advocating Romanism, he would so soon throw all the weight of his influence on the side of the Reformation? But so it was. When God sees proper He can put a hook in Sennacherib's nose, and a bridle in his lips, and lead him, like a subdued beast, in whatsoever direction He pleaseth.

14. During the last two centuries, England, as a Protestant nation, has enjoyed exalted privileges. "The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage." If ecclesiastical despotism has exer-

cised dominion over men's faith, and paraded lordship over God's heritage with an iron hand, under the honourable name of Reformed Christianity, the nation has, nevertheless, enjoyed a larger measure of religious liberty beneath the sceptre of Protestant rulers, than what was ever realized by any nation under papal control. But our privileges have not been duly appreciated, and consequently not improved in a degree at all commensurate with our opportunities. The sacred Scriptures have not been searched, nor the sanctuaries of God frequented as they ought to have been. Sabbaths have been profaned with a high hand and on a fearful scale. Avowed infidelity has stalked unblushingly through the land in open day. Thousands have annually debased and ruined themselves and families by drunkenness and its attendant evils. In short, the threatenings of an affronted God have been disregarded, and the gracious invitations of the gospel rejected, by the great masses of the nation. And if "God is angry with the wicked every day," it is impossible that He can regard with indifference the corruption of our times, and the general inattention of our fellow-countrymen to the claims of religion. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. v. 9.) Certainly He will if we do not repent. We recollect what is written concerning the privileges of Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Jerusalem; nor can we forget the calamities with which they were visited for their non-improvement of those privileges. By gospel mercies they were exalted to heaven; and for mercies abused they were thrust down to hell.

15. The most dreadful punishment which God inflicts on the wicked on this side the bottomless pit, is to "send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie; that they all

may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. ii. 11, 12). Not that God directly sends delusions to any man, but he sometimes permits men to be deluded and to believe in lies, as a judicial punishment for their sins. And have we not reason to suspect that the restoration of a popish hierarchy, and the revival of idolatry in our land, are strong delusions and lies, which God hath permitted to befall us as a punishment for our national impiety? Had the nation held the truth in righteousness, and practically carried out the great principles of the Reformation, popery, in its worst aspects, would have found no material to work upon. But when a man's heart is unrenewed by grace, and his mind unfurnished with sound scriptural knowledge, no matter whether he is a nobleman or a slave, he is liable to become the dupe of the grossest heresy.

16. These principles are well understood by the wafer-worshippers. Hence their dread of the Bible; and hence their mutilation of the Scriptures, to make the patriarch Jacob worship the top of his staff, and God not to forbid the making of, and bowing down to, images and pictures. And as they are now struggling hard to restore their prostrate idols in this country, it behoves every Protestant to neutralize the disgraceful attempt, by every legitimate means in his power. It is not sufficient that we ourselves despise wafer-adoration, we must care for our children, our domestics, our neighbours, and unborn posterity. Our fathers suffered, and bled, and died in dungeons, and in the fires of Smithfield, to put down idolatry, and to bless us with an uncorrupted gospel; and we their Protestant sons ought to exert ourselves earnestly and unweariedly to keep it down. If once waferolatry be again prevalent in this kingdom, whether popery be the dominant sect or not,

woe be to our descendants. If they be not tortured and put to death for the kingdom of heaven's sake, what is infinitely more to be dreaded, they may become a race of ignorant, stupid, and confirmed idolaters. Do we deprecate a crime of such magnitude? Would we prevent a revolt from God so fraught with evil? Then let us steadfastly and for ever set ourselves against making and "bowing down to the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or on earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth."

CHAPTER II.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, OF WHATEVER KIND, OUGHT TO BE OFFERED TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, AS OUR DIVINELY-APPOINTED AND EXCLUSIVE MEDIATOR.

1. What a Mediator is. 2. God is man's Creator, Benefactor, and Governor.
3. How does God deal with sinners? 4. The peculiar qualifications of Jesus Christ for this exalted office consist in the union of the human and Divine natures in His person. (1) He is the Divinely-constituted medium of access to the Father. (2) The only Mediator between God and man. (3) As Mediator He gave His life a sacrifice for the human race. (4) He invites mankind to assemble for the purpose of religious worship in His name. (5) He encourages us to pray in His name. (6) When He was upon earth He interceded with the Father in behalf of mankind. (7) As Mediator He now appears in the presence of God for us. (8) The atonement which He provided when He made His soul an offering for sin is for ever available. (9) The manner in which Christ intercedes in heaven for mankind is incomprehensible.

"For *there is* one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."—1 Tim. ii. 5.

1. A MEDIATOR is a third person who interposes between two parties at variance, with a view to effect their reconciliation. Accordingly, St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, iii. 20, says, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one"—viz., of one party only. A mediator always supposes two parties, between which he interposes to fulfil the duties of his office. And the Scriptures plainly teach that Jesus Christ

stands in this relation to God the Father on one hand, and to mankind on the other. "For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, (argues the apostle), sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this end He is the Mediator of the new Covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Heb. ix. 13—15. See also viii. 6; xii. 24.

2. God is man's Creator, Benefactor, and Governor. Man is God's dependent creature and subject. The revealed will of God is the proper rule of action to man. But the ungrateful subject revolted from his benevolent Sovereign by wilful transgression. Now there is a controversy between the Ruler and the subject. If the transgressor is allowed to escape with impunity, the authority of the Governor is brought into contempt. The good order and well being of intelligent society therefore require that the majesty of law shall be vindicated, and the claims of injured justice satisfied. The penalty annexed to the transgression must fall, with its unmitigated force, on the head of the rebel, unless some means, harmonizing with the operations of justice, can be devised, to bring the offender within the range of pardoning mercy. Apostate man is undone and helpless. His soul is defiled with sin, from which no ablutions can cleanse him. For past transgression it is beyond his power to make an atonement. Holy and benevolent angels may contemplate his crimes with mingled amazement and horror, and hover over him in compassion. They may feel disposed to snatch him as a

brand from the burning. But they *cannot* do it. It is not against angels, but against God that man has sinned, and God only has power to deal with the sinner.

3. And how does God deal with the sinner? Does He come forth as a consuming fire, and rain down upon him snares, and fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest? No. He proclaims Himself "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." But how can God forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet maintain the honour of His righteous but violated law? Through what wonderful provisions, and on what terms, can He consistently pardon the sinner? Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. On these all-important questions we are not left to grope our way in the dark, or to be guided by the clashing schemes of philosophers. The Divine plan of reconciliation is clearly revealed. We have an epitome of this most gracious plan in the following announcement:—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John iii. 16, 17. In accordance with this merciful declaration, Jesus Christ taught mankind that He came to call sinners to repentance, to seek and save the lost, and to officiate as Mediator, between them and their offended God.

4. *The peculiar qualifications of Jesus Christ for this high office consist in the union of the human and Divine natures in His Person.* "Being found in fashion as a man," He can sympathize with man, and "is not ashamed to call us brethren." And being "the brightness of His Father's

glory, and the express image of His Person, He thinks it no robbery to be equal with God," and is properly concerned for his glory. As Mediator Jesus Christ teaches mankind

(1). *That He is the divinely constituted medium of access to the Father.* When He informed His disciples that He was about to repair to His Father's house, where He would prepare a place for their reception and then return for them:—"And whither I go," said He, "ye know, and the way ye know,"—Thomas, not apprehending our Lord's meaning, said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus answered, I am the way, and the truth and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by Me." John xiv. 3—6. We meet with a passage of similar import in Matthew's Gospel, xi. 27. "All things are delivered to Me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any one the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal *Him*."

Prayer to the Father is unacceptable, when it either directly or tacitly denies the Mediatorship of Jesus Christ. Of this kind of prayer the following are examples:—

The first is a prayer which is attached to the *Koran*, as an Introduction: "Praise to God, the Lord of all created things, the all merciful, the King of the day of judgment. We pray to Thee and supplicate Thee for assistance. Lead us into the right way—into the way of those to whom Thou art merciful; not of those with whom Thou art wroth, or of those who go astray." This deistical prayer is designated by Henry Tyrrell, Esq., "unexceptionable, if not admirable:"* yet Mr. T. calls Christianity "*our own religion*."

The second is the prayer offered up in the London Syna-

* H. Tyrrell's History of the War with Russia, vol. I., p. 15.

gogues of the United Congregations, for the success of Sir Moses Montefiore's mission to Rome on behalf of Edgar Motara of Bologna :—

“Almighty God ! who hast assured us that Thy merciful kindness shall never depart, nor the Covenant of Thy peace be removed from us, Thou hast at all times hearkened to our prayer, and caused us to find mercy, when we were in calamity. In times of distress, Thou didst send us a Deliverer—a stronghold for the oppressed, in order to rescue the afflicted from the hands of those whose deeds are in darkness. Let our humble supplication at this time ascend to Thy Holy Temple for Thy servant Sir Moses Montefiore, who is again about to hazard his life in the blessed task of releasing the captive, and rescuing a child forcibly taken from his paternal roof and from the care of his parents, under pretence that he had been converted, even before he knew the difference between good or evil, or how to choose the one and reject the other. Put Thou, O Lord, the right words into the mouth of Thy servant, when he supplicateth for this child that it may be restored to its heart-broken father and distracted mother ; for the lad cannot leave his father,—if he should leave his father he would die. Encourage and strengthen him, that his words may be powerful ; send him Thy help from Thy sanctuary, and grant to him who feareth Thee a banner to be exalted. God of all reward ! Let the noble deeds of Thy servant be ever remembered,—deeds achieved on behalf of Israel ; for it was he who removed the aspersions of the caluminators and gloriously vindicated the innocence of Thy people : so that our righteousness went forth as the brightness of light. Give, O Lord, Thy angels charge over him, and over his kind-hearted consort, the Lady Judith Montefiore, the sharer of his peril, the mother of

the poor, and staff of the afflicted, and over all those who are aiding them on their mission. Protect and guide them throughout their journey; confirm their health, and let no danger come near unto them. Prolong their days, and satisfy them with the joys of life. Mayest Thou grant peace and increase prosperity in this our happy country. Grant that we may rejoice and exult in Thy salvation, and may we see the rejoicing of Zion. Amen."

If these prayers be impartially tested by the word of God, we do not see how evangelical charity itself can allow them to be acceptable to God. Jesus says, "If ye believe not that I am He (the promised Messiah) ye shall die in your sins." John viii. 21, 24.

(2). *Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man.* "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1. Tim. ii. 5. Compare this text with what our Lord says in the passage which we have just cited; "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," then what becomes of the long catalogue of mediators, to whose management so many of the affairs of the Romish Church are committed? They are all removed from the position which human folly assigned to them, and reduced to their proper level. The doctrine of saint-mediation is a wicked invention, and one of the grossest absurdities by which the papal community is disgraced. A thousand or ten hundred thousand suppliants, scattered over the face of the earth, all apply at the same moment to the Virgin Mary for help. And having presented their petitions, each retires well satisfied that the spirit of that holy woman will help him. What does all this imply? It implies an unfounded belief that a glorified human spirit is everywhere present at the same time—that it can listen distinctly to the details of its clients in every quarter of the

globe—and successfully manage their business in the court above. But in support of these assumptions there is not the slightest evidence in the Holy Scriptures. Omnipresency and ability to assist all that cry to God for help, are attributes which the Bible ascribes to Him only: and Christ Himself hath told us distinctly, and in very impressive language too, that it is through His mediation only that we can gain access to the throne of grace. In John x. 9, He says, “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” Observe, not “I am one of the *many* doors; nor, “I am the *chief* entrance;” but “I am **THE** door.”—The **ONLY** entrance.

Besides, it is a dishonour to Jesus Christ, to solicit saints to do for us that which He hath engaged to do for us Himself, or to request them to intercede with the Saviour for us, instead of applying directly to Him ourselves. Had he prohibited immediate addresses to Himself, and appointed saints and angels to form a class of subordinate mediators, we might innocently solicit their friendly services; but every man who carefully reads his Bible is certain that our blessed Lord made no such appointments; on the contrary He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Why then should we slight this gracious invitation, and entrust our eternal concerns to a creature, who is probably ignorant of our necessities? We do not see how a practice so utterly unwarranted by Scripture, so allied to Paganism, and so dishonourable to Christ, can fail to incur His displeasure.

(3). *Jesus Christ, as Mediator, gave His life as a sacrifice for the human race.* After the fall of man, the compassion of God inclined Him to provide some scheme of recon-

ciliation. "He wills all men to be saved," and accordingly made provision for the salvation of all men. "He spared not His own Son; but delivered Him up for us all." To promote this universal scheme of redemption, "Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom for all." Therefore, as all mankind seminally fell by the transgression of Adam, so all mankind virtually rise by the obedience of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross. In this merciful arrangement every individual of the human family is included, whatever may be his nation, language, complexion, rank, or condition. Our glorious Mediator "tasted death for every man," and hath *provisionally* reconciled every man to God by the blood of His cross—that is by His voluntary and sacrificial crucifixion. And as this redemption-price is a full and complete satisfaction to Divine justice in behalf of sinful men,

"The glorious gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day,"

and the enslaved sinner may *now* be restored to liberty and put in possession of his forfeited inheritance.

4.—*Jesus Christ, as Mediator, invites mankind to assemble for the purpose of religious worship in His name, and promises to meet with them when they are so convened.* "For where two or three," says He, "are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Nor will He be merely present as an indifferent witness to their devotions; but He will help their infirmities, receive their prayers, negotiate their important concerns with the Father, and secure for them seasonable relief. And if Jesus is everywhere present to hear and help us, we have no need of secondary mediators.

5.—*Jesus Christ encourages us to pray in His name.* Before His crucifixion, His disciples habitually applied to

Him for whatever blessings they needed ; but He instructed them, that after His resurrection they should present their petitions to the Father through the mediation of the Son. "And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John xvi. 23, 24.

6.—*Jesus Christ, when He was upon earth, interceded with the Father in behalf of mankind.* In the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, we have a beautiful and most interesting specimen of our Saviour's mediatorial intercession with the Father, in behalf of His Church. In this soul-reviving intercessory supplication, our blessed Lord prays for the preservation, unity, increase, holiness, and final glorification of His intelligent and blood-bought inheritance. Another affecting instance of our Saviour's mediation, in behalf of His murderers, is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, xxiii. 34. While He was enduring the torturing agonies of the cross, His exquisite sufferings seemed to be absorbed by the intensity of His compassion for the guilty wretches, who had nailed Him to the accursed tree. "Father," He exclaims, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In this extraordinary pleading for His destroyers, our Lord does not only intercede for their pardon, but also apologizes for their cruelty, by imputing it to their ignorance. So reluctant is He to punish, so willing to notice any extenuating circumstance, and so ready to forgive.

7.—*Having finished that department of His mediatorial work for which He appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh,* "He entered," says the apostle, "not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but

into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." As the Jewish High Priest went into the Holy of Holies once a year with the blood of the sacrificial victim, to sprinkle it before the mercy-seat, so Christ, who is the great High Priest of the Christian Church, having on earth shed His own blood, as a propitiatory offering, entered into heaven itself, which was typified by the Jewish sanctuary. There He appears, as an everlasting Priest, at the right hand of God, and intercedes for us continually. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost" from the nature, guilt, dominion, and punishment of sin, "that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." §

8.—*The atonement which Christ provided when He made His soul an offering for sin is for ever available.* And as His priesthood is unchangeable, He will ever continue to be the sole Mediator of the human race. And the privileges arising out of this abiding relation of Christ to mankind will be enjoyed, by all succeeding generations till time shall be no longer. Precisely how the High Priest of our profession intercedes for us in heaven, we presume not to explain. But we know that the body of Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, bore the scars of His crucifixion. In that body He ascended to heaven. And some of the ancients were of opinion, that His continual intercession consists in the perpetual presentation of His crucified humanity before His Father; because it is a constant memorial of His having, in obedience to His Father's will, offered Himself in human nature, as an atoning sacrifice for men, and a constant expression also of His ardent desire for their salvation. The same view of the subject is entertained by many modern divines and Christian poets. Take, for example, the following verse

from the beautiful hymns of Charles Wesley :—

“Five bleeding wounds he bears,
Received on Calvary:
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly speak for me:
Forgive him, O forgive, they cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.”

By a figure of speech, St. Paul gives a voice to the blood of Abel's sacrifice, and represents it as pleading successfully with God in His behalf. He also gives a voice to the blood of Christ; and asserts that His blood pleads efficaciously with God for blessings on the human race, which could not be secured by the blood of Abel's sacrifice. But we are come . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Heb. xii. 24. The blood of Abel pleaded for himself only; the blood of Christ pleads for the whole world.

Mr. W. Cooke, in his “Three Intercessions United,” beautifully remarks, “There is a moral argument in facts more powerful than the most eloquent appeals made in words. The presence of Jesus, (in heaven) as a wounded Saviour, is a moral argument, pleading infinite reasons for the sinner's life and salvation. For the Saviour's wounds attest that He was once dead—that He has passed to heaven, not by translation, as did Enoch and Elijah, but through the gate of mortality. They show, too, that He died not from disease, or natural decay, but by the hand of violence—that ‘He was put to death in the flesh,’ as a victim. This fact, connected with His innocence and exaltation, show that His death was vicarious, that He died not for Himself but for others; and if He died for others, then His death was sacrificial and expiatory;

and if expiatory, then His work as a Saviour is performed. Thus the presence of a Saviour in heaven, like the blood of the slaughtered victim sprinkled on the mercy-seat, proclaims that the atonement is an accomplished fact, that the mighty deed is done, and redemption's work is finished. . . . And here are the moral reasons forming the efficacious plea, that all the blessings of the covenant should be bestowed on every penitent suppliant."

9. But if, through the absence of clear and definite information in the Bible, as to the manner in which Christ performs His mediatorial office in heaven, the subject is placed beyond the range of our comprehension, this is no solid argument why we should regard the doctrine itself with unbelief. How God bringeth food out of the earth for our bodily nourishment, we cannot tell, but we know it is done. By what mysterious process He organizes matter, inert and unconscious as the soil on which we tread, and unites with it the principles of life and rationality, is "knowledge too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it;" but the fact that God is constantly doing these things, is so well sustained by evidence, that it does not admit of a reasonable doubt. And if we are not competent to demonstrate how our glorified Mediator manages our interests in heaven, the doctrine is clearly revealed and amply attested in the word of God. It ought therefore to form an article of our unwavering faith, and a source of the highest encouragement. By the lips of Eternal Truth we are assured that we have an all-sufficient Advocate at the right hand of God. Let us therefore disclaim all humanly constituted intercessors, whether they be angels or departed spirits, and offer all our devotions to the Father through our divinely appointed Mediator.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. It is desirable that we should acquire all attainable knowledge of our Creator, and of His will concerning us His creatures. 2. The Bible is a revelation of God's will to man. 3. The sacred Scriptures are the only authorized standard of faith and practice. 4. The Koran forged by Mahomet. 5. The Book of Mormon fabricated by Joseph Smith. 6. The Scriptures are intended for all mankind. 7. The English translation of the Scriptures is distinguished for its fidelity and plainness.—The testimonies of John Milton and Dr. Chalmers. 8. The Scriptures should be read regularly and orderly in families. 9. They have been wonderfully preserved. 10. John Wickliffe, the Morning Star of the English Reformation. 11. The invention of printing terrified the illiterate and profligate monks. 12. The Bible is the standard by which we shall be tried, and either acquitted or condemned at the day of judgment. 13. No order of men can be trusted as the faithful guardians and infallible interpreters of the Bible.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

THE infinite importance of the Bible to mankind will clearly appear from two or three plain considerations:—

1.—*It is desirable that we should acquire all attainable knowledge of our Creator and of His will concerning us His creatures.* Constituted as the human mind is, it is capable of arriving at a conclusion without the aid of a divine Revelation, that we are indebted to a superior Intelligent Power for our creation. It is indeed possible

for benighted and unreflecting pagans to think so seldom and so superficially on their origin, that their most exalted conceptions of the Creator are extremely erroneous and absurd. But God hath never left Himself without witness, even amongst nations of the lowest intellectual grade. For "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork: and there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Thus the visible things of the creation declare His eternal power and Godhead." The capital blunder of the Gentiles is not Atheism, or believing in no God, but in acknowledging a plurality of gods. This remark is applicable—not only to rude and uncultivated nations, but also to the Greeks and Romans, whose astonishing progress in the arts and sciences is the admiration of the whole civilized world. Hence, it is historically evident that the volume of nature is not adequate for the moral and intellectual wants of man. Luminaries and stars, plants and flowers, shells and stones—as well as vital organizations and animal instincts, have each a voice and testimony, that attest the existence of a Supreme Being; but on the plan of salvation they are as silent as death. The inquirer after salvation may study astronomy, geology, and the *fauna* and the *flora* of every region under heaven, without finding a satisfactory answer to the important question—"What must I do to be saved?"

Reason suggests that, as we are dependent creatures, and indebted to some Being superior to man, for our existence and preservation, He has a claim on our gratitude and faithful allegiance. So the heathen generally have reasoned in all ages and in all countries. And to this source in connection with traditionary law, may be traced their ablutions, sacrifices, offerings, pilgrimages, and

self-mortifications. No matter how wide from the truth, or how superstitious, or how cruel their religious faith and practices, they have all respect to certain deities, which are supposed to exercise a supernatural agency over the affairs of men. But the shocking corruption of their creeds and the abominable nature of their rituals afford the most appalling evidence that the book of nature is insufficient for their guidance in matters of religion. This truth was discovered and deplored by the most enlightened philosophers of the Gentile world, and some of them expressed a hope that God would vouchsafe the revelation of which they so sensibly felt the need.

2.—*The Bible is a revelation of God's will to man.*
“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The truth of this doctrine—the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, has often been assailed with great subtilty and learning, by men who do not like to submit to the salutary restraints of the Bible; but it has passed uninjured through every ordeal to which it has been subjected by its inveterate and talented adversaries. “The Bible,” says Bishop Watson, “has withstood the learning of Porphyry and the power of Julian, to say nothing of the Manichean Faustus. It has resisted the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, to say nothing of a numerous herd of inferior assailants.” And how strikingly holy, beautiful, and dignified are the characteristics of the Bible, when contrasted with the forgeries of the Koran, the book of Mormon, and the “lying wonders” of popery.

The former contain internal evidence of their Divine original; the latter bear undoubted marks of fraud. Fearlessly may we exclaim with the heroic David Simpson, "We defy all the sons of infidelity to show us any thing like the Bible, or second to it. Where will you meet with such a number of instructive proverbs, fervent prayers, sublime songs, beneficent miracles, apposite parables, infallible prophecies, affectionate epistles, eloquent orations, instructive histories, pure laws, rich promises, awful denunciations, useful examples, as are set before us in this richly-fraught magazine of all true excellence in matter and composition—the Bible?" Fired with these noble sentiments, we are prepared to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also,

"How precious is the Book Divine,
By inspiration given;
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to heaven."

3.—*The sacred Scriptures are the only authorized standard of faith and practice.* But before we proceed, it may be useful, if not absolutely necessary, to drop a word of caution. On one hand attempts are frequently made to obtrude catechisms and creeds on us, as substitutes for the word of God. And if we cannot fully assent and consent to every dogma which our would-be spiritual guides thrust on us, we are reminded in an authoritative tone, that "the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth!" But this is impossible. No society of men can be the pillar and ground of Divine truth. What gives a plausible colouring to this popish heresy is, a faulty translation of the iii. 15. of Paul's first Epistle to Timothy, which erroneous translation is corrected by modern commentators. Wesley renders the passage thus: "But if I tarry, thou

mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God. The mystery of godliness is the pillar and ground of the truth," &c. And by "the mystery of godliness" he understands the whole economy of Christ upon earth." Conservators of the truth a church may be; but the foundation of the truth it can never be. On the other hand, we must be careful not to base an article of faith, or any moral practice, on a passage of Scripture, the signification of which is doubtful. For want of this obviously necessary caution, many who reverence the authority of the Bible, have erred greatly from the truth as it is in Jesus. In some instances the sound of Scripture has been mistaken for the sense. In other instances a literal meaning has been attached to passages which are manifestly figurative. To this erroneous principle of interpreting metaphorical portions of God's word, must be attributed, in part at least, the monstrous doctrines of transubstantiation and purgatory. To the same indiscriminating source we may ascribe many of those whims and inconsistencies of professing Christians, who reflect dishonour on the Christian name.

But whenever the translation of any particular passage of Scripture is unquestionable, and a legitimate mode of interpretation proves that a certain sentiment is contained in that passage, then, but not otherwise, we may confidently admit the sentiment into our confession of faith. How then, it may be reasonably asked, can the Bible be a sure guide in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, to persons who are not competent to examine and collate the original Scriptures? To this question we reply that, "although there are passages of difficult explanation in the Bible, as might naturally be expected from the antiquity and peculiar languages of the Scriptures, yet in

most instances these passages do not relate to doctrines, and when they do, the doctrines in question are generally taught in other and plainer passages."* Few are disposed to complain of the insufficiency of revelation for the purposes of salvation, except those who are disinclined to make a proper use of those helps which the Holy Scriptures afford. The Jews of our Saviour's time could discern the face of the sky, and prognosticate approaching changes in the weather, by making observations on solar and atmospheric appearances. But they could not discern the signs of the times. Why could they not? because they had no desire to discern them. "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They made up their minds not to be convinced; evidence therefore was not what they desired, but what they dreaded. "They shut their eyes lest they should see, stopped their ears lest they should hear, and hardened their hearts lest they should be converted, and God should heal them."

From the description which our Lord has given of the conversation between Abraham in paradise, and the rich man in hell, it is manifest that the way to heaven is intelligibly pointed out in the inspired Scriptures. Dives begs that his five surviving brethren, who are following him to the bottomless pit, may be apprised of their danger, by a messenger from the invisible world. "They have Moses and the prophets," says Abraham, "let them hear THEM." Dives urges his plea: "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent." Abraham replies, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." In this awful passage, the sufficiency and perfection of the Bible as a revelation of God's will to man

* Storr and Flatt's Theology, p. 78.

is distinctly asserted. The like sentiments are expressed by the Psalmist in the following beautiful terms :—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes ; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever ; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. xix. 7—9. And be it remembered that these declarations refer to the Old Testament only, in addition to which we are favoured with a still more luminous revelation in the New Testament. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And "life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel." From the days of Moses down to those of the apostles inclusive, the Divine Being gradually communicated His mind to the human race, by reducing it to writing, through the medium of inspired historians, prophets, and apostles. The sacred Volume was then closed and sealed, and given to the world as the only standard of religious faith and practice. But such is the restless desire of mankind to be wise above what is divinely written for their instruction, and such is the audacious presumption of a certain class of men, that counterfeit revelations have been fabricated by bold impostors, and industriously circulated and defended by their impudent disciples in every quarter of the globe.

4. The first grand forgery of this kind, under the Gospel Dispensation, was the Koran, which was invented by Mahomet, the sanguinary Arabian impostor. His spurious revelations were revised and sanctioned by the Caliph Omar, in 652, and have been the means of leading millions and hundreds of millions astray from those living Oracles, which "are the power of God unto salvation to

every one that believeth." And after the lapse of twelve centuries, it is estimated that one hundred and forty millions are the followers of this arch deceiver, and prefer his soul-destroying fables to "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

5. In modern times the greatest forgery of this class was palmed on the Americans, by Joseph Smith and his associates in crime, about thirty years ago. After careful investigation on the spot by creditable persons, who were competent to conduct such an inquiry with prudence, it has been satisfactorily ascertained that the original materials of the Book of Mormon were imprudently written by Mr. Solomon Spaulding, a superannuated minister, for a little pastime and amusement, without the remotest design of stamping them fictitiously with the seal of heaven. But Joseph and his companions gained access to these documents, probably through the intervention of a printer, in whose hands they were trusted for a considerable time, and formed the wicked design of making them the basis of a long series of spurious revelations. The plot being contrived, it was carried out with that remarkable effrontery which not unfrequently characterizes the religious impostor. As might have been expected, crowds of ignorant and fanatical dupes listened to the extravagant harangues of the new apostles with enthusiastic admiration, and perused their illiterate and grovelling romance with childish credulity. The imposture, aided by such converts, spread like a pestilence; and thousands of Englishmen have disgraced their Christian name and protestant profession, by allowing themselves to be blinded by this gross delusion. Had they made a proper use of their Bibles they would have been able to detect the fraud, despite of all the cunning and feigned sanctity of its inter-

ested champions. It is one of the easiest things in the world for a false prophet to set his brow as brass, to throw out a string of extravagant assertions, and then to set every man at defiance ; but after all, fiction can no more stand the fiery trial of Divine truth, than base metal can endure the ordeal of a furnace. Neglect your Bible, and you are liable to fall a prey to the rankest imposture ; get your understandings well enlightened, and your souls well fortified with Divine truth, then you will be able to distinguish the ministers of Satan from the ministers of God, although the former may transform themselves into angels of light. But whether you receive the Holy Scriptures in their purity, or corrupt them with spurious additions ; the Bible will stand, firm as an everlasting rock, as the only authorised criterion of moral right and wrong.

6. *The Sacred Scriptures are intended for all mankind.*

Suppose a man steps forward and announces himself to be a teacher sent from God to show us the way of salvation, then delivers a course of lectures on religion, and finally threatens us with eternal condemnation if we reject his message, how are we to know whether or not these things be so, if we are denied access to the Divine Oracles ? And if he obstinately reserves these Oracles to himself in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages ; and will neither translate them, nor, if he can prevent it, suffer any one else to translate them into our own tongue for our personal perusal, we have just reason to question the sincerity or the justice of his pretensions. Were a sovereign to draw up a code of laws for the government of his subjects, and then confine the publicity of those laws to magistrates, and yet visit transgressors with severe punishment, would not his subjects have reason to complain of the injustice of

his administration? Yet such an administration has often been attributed to the beneficent Governor of the universe, by His professed ambassadors. During the lapse of many centuries, the popes and their clergy have set their faces as flint against the general diffusion of the Scriptures. Very recently, Francisco Madaia and his wife Rosa were suffering imprisonment and hard labour in Tuscany, to which they had been cruelly condemned by the Grand Duke, for no other crime than that of reading the Bible, and holding and teaching Protestant doctrines in their own house. The violent opposition of the Romish priesthood to the Bible undoubtedly is, because it so plainly condemns many of their principles and practices; and they are not yet disposed to regulate the constitution, doctrines, and worship of their church by the Divine Standard. Consequently, to screen the corruptions of a degenerate clergy, the people are denied the Lamp of life.

In 1533, the authority of the pope was overthrown in England, and Henry VIII. was declared head of the Church. But Henry was a very capricious head. He was no hearty friend to the Reformation; but he hated the pope, and oscillated backwards and forwards, like the pendulum of a clock, as his passions swayed him. In 1535, Miles Coverdale finished the first complete translation of the English Bible, and dedicated it to Henry, by whom it was submitted to the perusal of the bishops, who alleged there were faults in it, but admitted that it maintained no heresies. "If there be no heresies," said his majesty, "let it go abroad among the people." This was joyful news to all those who were anxious to read "in their own tongue the wonderful works of God." But the vacillating king soon turned their joy into sadness. Towards the end of his reign his zeal for the Reformation

became lukewarm, and his hostility to the Pope abated. Hence an act of Parliament was passed, in which, among other persecuting clauses, is ordained, "That the Bible shall not be read in English, in any church. No woman, artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving-men, husbandmen, or labourers, shall read the New Testament in English." But though Henry prohibited the lower classes from reading the Bible, he permitted—"Noblemen or gentlemen to read it in their houses, orchards, or gardens, quietly and without disturbance of good order. Ladies of quality also might read it to themselves alone, but not to others. And although the Bible was forbidden to be read in churches, yet the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, captains of the army, justices of the peace, and recorders of cities, might quote passages to enforce their public harangues, as had been accustomed." Such were the unrighteous distinctions enacted by the head of the English Church, and this, too, only a few years after he had determined "that the people should be nursed up in Christ by the Bible." So much for the "defender of the faith," as a foster father to the Christian Church. "Nothing," says Dr. A. Clarke, "can be more preposterous and monstrous than to call people to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, and refuse them the opportunity of consulting the Book in which they are contained. Persons who are denied the use of the sacred writings may be manufactured into different forms and modes: and be mechanically led to believe certain dogmas, and perform certain religious acts; but, without the use of the Scriptures they never can be intelligent Christians."

The opposition of the Papal Church to the Bible is still unchanged. "Look at the city of Rome. For ages the Papal Church has had the fairest opportunity that a

Church could have of making its inhabitants acquainted with the Scriptures. And what is the true state of the case?"

An intelligent man, who had resided in Rome fifty years, says, "*I never saw a Bible.*" A few years ago the Rev. Mr. Seymour, an accomplished clergyman of the Established Church of this country, visited Rome, and in his interesting work called "*Mornings among the Jesuits at Rome,*" he has made known some of the conversations he had with certain dignitaries of the Vatican. To one professor he complained that he could not obtain an Italian Bible in all Rome. The professor replied "The inhabitants of Rome are too poor to buy one." This difficulty was at once obviated by Mr. S., who generously answered:—"I will gladly, if permitted, provide a number of Bibles to be sold very cheap, or bestowed gratis." The priest archly replied:—"The people of Rome are so brutally ignorant that they could not read the Bible." Another traveller says, "I went into one of the principal booksellers' shops in Rome the other day, and said, 'I want a Bible.'" "Very well, sir, here is one," "Why," I said, "this is a series of volumes; do you call this the Bible?" "Yes, sir." "Pray how many volumes are there, it looks more like a library than the Bible." "Sir," he said, "there are seventy-seven volumes." "Seventy-seven volumes!" I counted them one after the other, and the number was seventy-seven. In fact the work was so overlaid with notes, that it was like the Tarpeian Maid sinking under the weight of her ornaments; you could scarcely recognise the text, owing to the mass of note and comment with which it was encompassed.* In the Papal states no Bible can be obtained; Ciocchi (whose life and

* Sketch of Popery, by the Religious Tract Society.

escape from a monastery, was issued a few years ago in English,) says he was grown up ere he ever saw one, although he was placed in a monastery at seven years of age, with the intention of making him a priest.* The Rev. N. Hall, when giving an account of a visit to Rome, says :—"I had often been told by Roman Catholics in England, to say that the Bible was a forbidden book in Italy, and could not be purchased at the booksellers, was a slander. I resolved to test the question for myself, but the invariable reply to every application was as I expected :—*Prohibito.*" Mr. Hall, was anxious to meet with some Florentine who would freely converse with him on politics and religion, and at length he met with a person of intelligence, who did not hesitate to answer his enquiries, on ascertaining that he was an Englishman, and that no one else was within hearing. The Madiais were then in prison, and Mr. H. asked the gentleman whether he knew anything of them. He replied, "They were good quiet people, never charged with political disaffection, or even suspected of it. Their only crime was reading the Bible with some of their domestics. The law forbids us even to possess it in the Italian language. Any crime can be more easily committed with impunity. If you want a murder committed, and give a stiletto to an assassin, you can get him off if you have a priest for your friend. But if you read the Bible there is no escape, for all the priests are against you. They are undoubtedly at the bottom of this severe law." He then told Mr. H. of a young man who was imprisoned four months for reading the Bible. "His house was entered and searched one morning at four o'clock when he and his family were in bed; he was so respected in the bank, where he was a clerk, that his

* Christian Guardian, page 254, for 1845.

salary was continued during his imprisonment. When his friends demanded from the authorities on what pretext he was detained in gaol, the only answer was :—" It is sufficient that a Bible was found in his possession." " Mr. Hall says, " At this very moment many poor Tuscans are in wretched dungeons, for no other offence than the possession of the word of God."*

Even dignitaries of the Romish Church have not been ashamed to express their approval of such proceedings. When Dr. Murray, of Ireland, was giving his evidence before Parliament he was asked : " Have the Scriptures any practical circulation in the vulgar language in Spain ?" he replied, " They had not then ;" that is when he was residing there. Dr. Doyle, who was educated in Portugal, was also asked, " Did you ever see in Portugal any translation into the vulgar tongue, whether allowed or not ?" To which he answered, " No, I did not." He was asked at the same time, " Would you allow any of the peasantry of Ireland who might persevere in reading the Scriptures in the authorised version, to be received to the Sacrament ?" he answered, " No, I certainly would not." " Should you think it improper for such an individual to bury the word of God ?" " I should be highly amused with such a proceeding." " Would you think him highly deserving of approbation ?" "*I would reward the man.*" And that this was not a hollow pretence, is evident from the manner in which the Bible is treated in Ireland. Hear what Mr. O'Brien says :—

" I assert with all the solemnity of an oath, that while I lived in Maynooth College, for six years, and was educated for a priest in the Church of Rome, I never had a Bible in

* The Land of the Forum and the Vatican. By Newman Hall, B.A., page 143.

my hand, from the College, nor am I aware that any of my class-fellows ever possessed a copy of that sacred book; nor was it a class-book in our divinity course, even in a dead language. After the usual career in college, I was ordained by the most Rev. Dr. Murray, from whom I still retain my letters of orders. When by the blessing of God, I came to read the Bible, I renounced for ever the Popery of Romanism, and embraced the pure religion of Jesus Christ.”* This is popery as it now is.

7. *The English translation of the Scriptures is distinguished for its fidelity and plainness.* In confirmation of this statement we produce the testimony of two able and credible witnesses. The first is John Milton.

“It is said the Scriptures are difficult to be understood, and therefore require the explanation of the Fathers. It is true there be some books, and especially some places in those books, that remain clouded; yet even that which is most necessary to be known is most easy; and that which is most difficult so far expounds itself ever, as to tell us how little it imports our saving knowledge. Hence, to infer a general obscurity over all the text, is a mere suggestion of the devil to dissuade men from reading it, and casts an aspersion of dishonour both upon the mercy, truth, and wisdom of God. We count it no gentleness or fair dealing in a man of power amongst us, to require a strict and punctual obedience, and yet give out all his commands ambiguous and obscure. We should think he had a plot upon us. Certainly such commands were no commands, but snares. The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness.”

The second is Dr. Chalmers to the students of his Theological class :—

* Popery Unmasked, by Mr. Henry Woodcock.

“ I want you to know that with the English version in your hands, all the essential and all the moral wealth of God’s revelations have thereby not come into your possession only, but into the full possession of the whole population in these realms. I want to deliver them from the imputation that there exists the barrier of an *unknown tongue* between their minds and one single truth, which can in the least contribute either to their present or their immortal well-being.”

8. *The Scriptures should be read—not only privately and in the closet, but also in the family ; and this, too, not in a desultory, but in a regular, orderly manner.* And as there is a connection between the several parts of the Holy Scriptures, and some portions are illustrated by other portions, with the exception of a few paragraphs which modern delicacy may reserve for silent perusal, the Bible should be read through regularly, which may be accomplished in about a year, by reading two chapters in the Old Testament and one chapter in the New Testament daily. It is a dangerous and guilty practice to allow our children and domestics to be ignorant of the word of God through our negligence. Besides, it is good Christian policy to let the several members of our household hear for themselves the duties which God hath annexed to their respective relations in life, and on one hand the rewards which He hath promised to those who discharge their duties faithfully, and on the other, the penalties which He hath threatened to inflict on those who neglect them.

How frequently do we hear heads of families complain of the great difficulties which they experience in maintaining the ascendancy with which God hath invested them, and keeping the subjects of their circumscribed dominions under proper control. It occurs but too commonly, that

the father and mother of a family are not one in Christ Jesus, and consequently are not united in their efforts to train their offspring for God and heaven. In such a case, it is of paramount importance to familiarize the minds of children, from their infancy, with the grace and truth of the gospel. These sentiments are practically confirmed by the following instructive anecdote.

“The mother of a family was married to an infidel, who made a jest of religion in the presence of his own children; yet she succeeded in bringing them all up in the fear of the Lord. She was asked how she had preserved them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own. This was her answer, ‘Because to the authority of a father I did not oppose the authority of a mother, but that of God. From their earliest years my children have always seen the Bible upon my table. This holy book has constituted the whole of their religious instruction. Did they propose a question; did they commit a fault; did they perform any good action, I opened the Bible, and the Bible answered, reproved, or encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought this prodigy.’”

Parental government administered with discretion, and supported by the high authority of God’s word, exerts a powerful and gracious influence on the juvenile mind; and every guardian of a family is positively commanded by the Almighty to assiduously impart biblical knowledge to the members of his household; for thus saith the Lord, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest

by the way ; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”—Deut. xi. 18, 19.

9. *The Holy Scriptures have been almost miraculously preserved and handed down to us by Providence, at a great expenditure of property, and liberty, and life, on the part of faithful and self-denying disciples of Christ.* Under different dispensations, in various countries, and in different ages of the world, thousands and tens of thousands have been robbed, and banished, and imprisoned, and tortured, and murdered for the word of God and the unflinching testimony which they bore to its Divine authenticity. “Some had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy), they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” During the first three centuries of the Christian era, before the papal antichrist had usurped the sovereignty of the Church, the followers of Christ were condemned, by the Roman emperors, to all kinds of tortures, for their inflexible adherence to revealed truth.

Nor were torments less cruel inflicted by the Romish priests on the leading Reformers, on account of their laudable zeal in translating the Scriptures into different languages for the benefit of the unlearned. This work ought to have been done by the ministers of religion, with all possible fidelity, and without any unnecessary loss of time. The apostles themselves set the example. They were Jews, but they did not record the revelations which

the Holy Spirit gave them, in the Jewish language, but in the Greek tongue. And the numerous quotations from the Old Testament, which appear in the New, are generally selected—not from the Hebrew, but from the *Septuagint*, an ancient Greek version of the Old Testament scriptures. But why did the New Testament writers prefer the use of the Greek tongue, as the medium of their Divine inspirations, to the language of their own country? For a very obvious reason; the knowledge of the Jewish language was very limited; but the Greek was extensively understood throughout the Roman empire, which was the grand sphere of apostolic labours. The plain dictate of unsophisticated reason is, that into whatever country the Christian missionary penetrates, when he has become sufficiently conversant with the vernacular language of the people, one of his first concerns should be, to place in their hands a faithful translation of the Holy Scriptures, that they may read “in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.” So the illustrious leaders of the Reformation thought! And this great principle, sanctified and guided by the grace of God, impelled them to deeds of benevolence and heroism, which have rarely been equalled and never surpassed by mortal men.

10. “The Morning Star of the English Reformation,” was John Wickliffe. He was born at Wycliffe, a small village, containing a population of about 170 souls, near Barnard Castle, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. This learned and honest divine, by candidly comparing the scriptures with the state of the Church, clearly perceived that she was overrun and degraded by error and superstition; and he resolved to remove the Latin veil from the Vulgate, and translate the Bible into English. The New Testament was finished about the year 1367, and before

1381 he had completed the Old Testament. Before this translation appeared, the word of God was scarcely to be found in this country, in a language which the people could understand. To the circulation of Wickliffe's translation, the ecclesiastical and wealthier classes were not favourable. Hence, in 1390, a bill was brought into the House of Lords, to prohibit the use of English Bibles; but the iniquitous bill was successfully opposed by John, Duke of Lancaster, Wickliffe's patron. About A.D. 1408, Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, decreed, in a convocation of the clergy at Oxford, that no translation made either in or since Wickliffe's time, should be read, till it was approved by the bishop of the diocese, or in a provincial council. This unrighteous decree was enforced by severe persecutions. The noble British Reformer, whose memory will ever be venerated by English Protestants, having rendered valuable service to his generation, ended his days in peace, in a good old age, December 31st, 1384. But such was the hatred of the Papists towards his name, that after he had reposed quietly in his grave forty years, they ferociously exhumed his bones, burned them to ashes, which they threw into the brook Swift, near Lutterworth, in Leicestershire. But the outbursts of his enemies' rage were too late to do the good man any injury. His abused remains, are we trust, in the safe custody of Jesus Christ, who will raise them up at the last day.

11. The invention of printing, about 1430, wonderfully facilitated the progress and triumphs of the Bible, which greatly alarmed the illiterate and profligate monks. They complained openly, that "a book had come forth, called the New Testament, which was in everybody's hands, and was full of thorns and briers." And in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross, London, "We must root out

printing," said the vicar, "or printing will root out us." The vicar might have been wider from the mark; the art of printing has contributed powerfully towards the exposure and eradication of popish error, and the revival of Christian truth. The first Protestant translator of the Scriptures into English was William Tindall. Wales had the honour of giving him birth. Having embraced the opinions of Luther, he formed the design of translating the New Testament into English; but finding no opportunity of carrying out his noble intention in this country, he fled for refuge to Antwerp, in Flanders, where he was assisted with £10 a year by Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy citizen of London. In this retreat Tindall finished his favourite work, with the assistance of John Fry and William Roye, the former of whom was burned by the Papists, in Smithfield, for heresy, July, 1552, and the latter suffered the same fate, from the same hands, in Portugal, on the ground of the same accusation. The professed, but treacherous guardians of the Bible reasoned logically, when they concluded that the most effectual way to check the circulation of the Scriptures was, to destroy both them and their translators. And as they intensely desired the former they resolved to do the latter. At the instigation of Romish priests, several severe proclamations were issued by Henry VIII., against all who read or kept by them Tindall's translation of the New Testament; so that a copy of this Book found in the possession of any person was sufficient to convict him of heresy, and subject him to the flames. Subsequently, Henry and his Council seized Tindall and committed him to prison. He was condemned to suffer death by a decree of the German Emperor, in an Assembly at Augsborg; and in the year 1536, he was strangled at Villefort, near Brussels, after

which his body was reduced to ashes. He expired, praying earnestly, "that the Lord would open the King of England's eyes." Thus the word of God, in our mother tongue, has come down to us through the life-blood of its heroic translators. Never then let us give papal Rome occasion to suspect, that we lightly appreciate those blessings for which our pious and devoted ancestors paid so dear a price.

12. *The Bible is the standard by which we shall be tried, and either acquitted or condemned at the day of judgment.* Had the scriptures been given to us merely for the proper regulation of our conduct, in all the relations of this life, and were rewards and punishments confined to the present world, the revealed will of God would have been entitled to our serious attention; and we should have found our greatest happiness in uniform obedience to His laws. What is the collective design of civil government? It is for the maintenance of order, during the present state of things. This object is a noble one, and sanctioned by heaven. "The powers that be are ordained of God." And a people are secure, peaceful and prosperous, or the reverse, in proportion as they obey or disobey righteous laws and good government. The sovereign ruler bears not the sword in vain. By a conventional arrangement he is invested with supreme executive power, and he wields this power for the suppression of wrong and the vindication of right. If any dare to violate the laws of his realm, they are amenable to his tribunal, and liable to be punished. If the liberties or rights of his faithful subjects are infringed, they can appeal to him for redress; and through the medium of his subordinate officers, he takes cognizance of all cases which come before his courts of justice for adjudication. He is therefore a terror to them that do evil

and for the praise of them that do well. Society finds its interest in upholding his authority. It is better, incomparably better, to resign a part of our liberty, and contribute towards the maintainance of government, than to live in a state of lawless anarchy. But, however powerful the reasons are in favour of our obedience to human law, there are arguments far more powerful, for our submission to the divine law. No earthly government is perfect. Some human laws are defective and require amendment, others are radically and thoroughly bad, and ought to be repealed, but the divine government is without flaw. The laws of heaven are holy, and just, and good, Rom. vii. 12. Human laws are not invariably administered with impartiality, but with God there is no respect of persons. Transgressions of human law may avoid detection or elude the hand of justice; but if any man sin against God's law, his "sin will surely find him out," and justice will overtake him. The severest human penalty can only kill the body; but an insulted God can destroy body and soul and cast them into hell-fire.

We ought never to forget that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the distinguished privileges which we enjoy under the dispensation of the Gospel will all be taken into account; favourable opportunities involve heavy responsibilities. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." That is, the impenitent Gentiles who sin against the light of their dispensation, which includes no written will of God, will finally perish through their wilful transgression, but their punishment will be regulated by the unfavourable circumstances in which they are providentially placed. On the other hand, the impenitent Jews, to whom were commit-

ted the ancient oracles of God, will be dealt with according to the superior advantages which they enjoyed. By the same equitable rule of judgment a Christian people, who are blessed with the New Testament Scriptures, will be tried by the principles of the still brighter dispensation under which they live. "He that rejecteth Me," saith the Son of God, "and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day," John xii. 48. By the doctrines which our Saviour taught our final state will be determined, when God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts, and reward or punish us as we have believed and obeyed, or despised and violated these Divine teachings. And if "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb x. 28, 29).

Many there are, and we regret that we have occasion to say it, who plead their inability to read as an excuse for their ignorance of God's word. But have we not reason to fear, that in very numerous instances, the validity of this plea will not be admitted by the righteous Judge? If in a few peculiarly unfavourable circumstances a personal knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is unattainable, in the generality of cases, by a little humility and industry, every obstacle to the attainment of this blessing may be easily surmounted. The Bible is now so extremely cheap, the ability to read it so general, and the means of instruction are so numerous and easy of access, that almost every person in England has the opportunity

of learning to read the word of God, if he is willing to avail himself of the necessary helps which Providence hath placed within his reach. And if "he that knoweth his Master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," surely he that *might* know his Master's will, but through indolence does not know it, will have no cloak for his wilful ignorance. And whether we read, and study, and love the Bible or not, it is the criminal code by which every unconverted soul amongst us will be tried and condemned at the last great assize. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works" (Eccl. xii. 14, Rev. xx. 12). Let no precious time, therefore, be drivelled away in supineness or useless employment; and let no opportunity of acquiring a personal knowledge of the sacred writings, pass unimproved.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPERIENCE HAS CONVINCED ALL THE SENSIBLE PART OF MANKIND THAT NO MAN, NOR ANY ORDER OF MEN, CAN BE SAFELY TRUSTED AS THE FAITHFUL GUARDIANS AND INFALLIBLE INTERPRETERS OF THE BIBLE.

Preliminary remarks—(1) The unfaithfulness of the patriarchs. (2) Negligence and superstition of Gentile nations. (3) Moral depravity of the learned Greeks and Romans. 1. The corruption of the Jewish priesthood, and their consequent false teaching. 2. The apostacy and doctrinal errors of the Church of Rome. 3. Blind leaders of the blind among Protestant interpreters of the Scriptures. 4. The reading of the Scriptures should constitute a part of public worship. 5. The Scriptures ought to be prayerfully studied as well as devoutly read. 6. Merely searching the Scriptures cannot enrich the soul with saving grace.

"I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them."—Acts xx, 29, 30.

If the public teachers of religion were incapable of falling into doctrinal error, had they never kept anything back from the people which it is their interest to know, and had they never abused the confidence of the illiterate and simple-minded, even then it would be improper to blindly commit ourselves to their guidance, and substitute their instruction for divine revelation. But it is a melancholy fact, which admits of no reasonable dispute, that whether we glance at Gentiles, Jews, or Christian nations, the grossest corruptions have been either introduced or winked at by the professed ambassadors of God.

Had the patriarchal priesthood been faithful to their trust, it would have been impossible for idolatry to spread

so rapidly over the earth as it did after the deluge. The traditional knowledge of God in the family of Noah, carefully handed down from father to son, would have preserved in all nations correct views of the Divine Being, and of the nature of that worship which he required of mankind. Nor could this knowledge have ever been effaced from the human mind by the indolence and infidelity of the multitude. But if when the ministers of religion "knew God they glorified him not as God," it is no marvel that truth fell in the streets, was gradually supplanted by error, till darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people.

(1). Terah, the father of Abraham, was contemporary with Noah one hundred and twenty-eight years. But when God called Abraham to leave his country and his kindred, a hundred years or fewer after the death of Noah, Terah was an idolater, as his father probably was before him. Joshua distinctly asserts their idolatrous practices, in a public speech which he delivered to the tribes of Israel just before his death. "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (beyond the river Euphrates), in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods" (chap. xxiv. 2).

(2). In heathen nations, right notions of God, which were derived from tradition, or from intercourse with the ancient Israelites, have been wilfully suffered to decline, and horrid superstition has been countenanced, and even invented, by a treacherous priesthood. We learn from printed records, published by missionaries who have acquired a knowledge of the sacred books and religious customs of the Hindoos, that the learned among them ac-

knowledge only one Supreme Deity, whom they call Brahm, or, the Great One. They suppose him to manifest his power by the operation of his Divine Spirit, whom they call Vishnoo, the "Pervader;" and by his power they believe that the whole order of nature is preserved and supported. When they consider the divine power exerted in creating, or in giving existence to that which existed not before, they call the deity Brahma. When they view him in the light of Destroyer, they give him the name of Siva. To represent this trinity of divine manifestations, they have three beautiful statues, each of which bears in his hands some instruments, which are emblematical of his office. Learned men suppose that these notions of God were originally borrowed from corrupted historical passages of the Old Testament.* But if the best informed Hindoos, which include the Brahmins or priests, who constitute the highest caste, acknowledge but one Supreme Deity, who is the Creator, Preserver, and Punisher of mankind, do they inculcate these doctrines, and jealously guard them, and give them due prominence? We are assured they do not. On the contrary, we are informed, that "the most childish and extravagant stories about the gods and giants are believed by the people. They know nothing about the real origin of these stories, while the Brahmins craftily multiply such idle tales, and enjoin an almost countless number of ridiculous and often indecent ceremonies. The most shameful and cruel practices prevail as a part of their religion! While Brahma, Vishnoo, and Siva are their chief deities, the number of their gods is almost beyond calculation. And amongst the people there are perpetual quarrels, some of them being zealous for one god, and some for another."†

* Church Missionary Papers, No. XX., 1820. † Ibid, No. XIX., 1820.

(3) Follies and crimes equally scandalous were held sacred by the highly civilized Greeks and Romans, whose learned priests could not but know that many of the popular religious notions and practices were alike revolting to philosophy and common sense. But they were too depraved themselves to boldly withstand the errors and corruptions of the people. Instead, therefore, of attempting to bring about a moral reformation, and inviting the deluded people to renounce their broken cisterns, and earnestly to search for the Fountain of living water, they patronized and encouraged them to "revolt more and more."

1. But what shall we say of the Jewish priesthood? They had not to grope in the dark, and dig for truth in a deep mine, surrounded and concealed by a load of superincumbent error. They were privileged with a clearly attested revelation from God, as a firm basis for all their religious doctrines, rites, and ceremonies. Their duties, as the conservators, teachers, and conductors of public worship were specified distinctly in the Divine law. How then did they discharge their sacred trust? Some of them, doubtless, were good men and true; and, like Zacharias, who was one of their order, they "walked in the ordinances and statutes of the Lord blameless," and "did turn many away from iniquity." Others of them, at different periods of the Jewish history, were "blind leaders of the blind," and plunged, with their confiding followers, headlong "into the ditch." Some were lazy and ignorant. "The watchmen of Israel," says the prophet Isaiah, "are blind: they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot

understand : they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." So that they could feed themselves with the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, they cared very little what became of the flock. Others were profanely wicked, as the sons of Eli, who "made the Lord's people to transgress." Others again, were idolaters, as the Levite who was domestic chaplain to Micah, in whose house were "an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image." Well might God complain of their unfaithfulness, and warn the people to be on their guard against the heresy of their spiritual guides, saying, "O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths," Isaiah iii. 12. When Josiah ascended the throne of Judah, the idleness and depravity of the priesthood were extreme ; for not only the kingdom of Israel, but Judah and Jerusalem also, were deeply sunk in idolatry. The word of God appears to have fallen into general disuse. In the twentieth year of his age, Josiah commenced in earnest a reformation. "He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence ; and the images that were on high above them, he cut down ; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he broke in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem." While the house of the Lord was undergoing repairs, the discovery of the Book of the Law appears to have been an unexpected event ; and when the God-fearing monarch heard it read he was greatly alarmed, because it disclosed, in a terrific light, the sad degeneracy of the times.

In the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets, God gives the priesthood a wretched character. "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. . . . For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts."—(Chap. ii. 1, 2, 7, 8.) Such was the character of the Levitical priesthood when the volume of the Old Testament was finished. Nor, four hundred years later, have we a more favourable report of their piety in the New Testament. Who were they that perverted the Scriptures to their own destruction, and were blind leaders of the blind? Scribes, lawyers, and priests. Who were they that took away the key of knowledge, and would neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves nor suffer others to enter into it? The scribes, lawyers, and priests. Who were they that vilified the spotless character of Christ, and clamoured for his precious life? The priests. Who were they that encouraged Saul of Tarsus to hunt and persecute the disciples of Christ? The priests. Who were they that dealt in profane and old wives' fables, taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and rendered the word of God of no effect by their traditions? They were the professed and acknowledged teachers of religion. Such were the men who boasted of their divine authority, and who expected the people to receive their instructions with gratitude and veneration.

2. Let us now come down to Gospel times, and see with what fidelity the pretended successors of the apostles have handled the word of God. (1.) To support the idolatrous practice of making and bowing down to images, Romish priests have *struck out the second commandment* of the Decalogue, *divided the tenth into two*, and then circulated *nine* commandments, as the original *ten*, amongst an ignorant and confiding people. "This," says the learned Dr. A. Clarke, "is totally contrary to the faith of God's elect, and to the acknowledgment of that truth which is according to godliness. The verse is found in every manuscript of the Hebrew Pentateuch that has ever yet been discovered. It is in all the ancient versions, Samaritan, Chaldee, Syriac, Septuagint, Vulgate, Coptic, and Arabic; also in the Persian, and in all modern versions. There is not one word of the whole verse wanting in the many hundreds of manuscripts collected by Kennicott and De Rossi. This corruption of the word of God by the Roman Catholic Church stamps it, as a *false* and *heretical* Church, with the deepest brand of everduring infamy." In like manner, and for the same reason, the Romish priesthood have expunged the preposition "on" in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. 21, which forces the passage to say that "Jacob, when dying, worshipped the top of his staff;" instead of saying that he worshipped (leaning or bowing down) upon the top of his staff. We may just remark by the way, that were the Romish translation correct, it would afford no countenance to image worship. The passage in question would be merely a record of an insane or an idolatrous act, according to the state of the patriarch's mind when he performed the act in question. The Divine command not to bow down to any likeness remains intact. The papal comment on the

passage is as fabulous as the translation of the text is corrupt. "Jacob paid a relative honour and veneration to the top of the rod or sceptre of Joseph, as to a figure of Christ's sceptre and kingdom, as an instance and argument of his faith." This miserable gloss makes bad worse. A translation of the Bible, or a quotation from it, which is unfaithful and essentially defective, is to the inquiring Christian what the defective chart was to Captain Hosken, commander of the "Great Britain." Having lost his course as he neared Dundrum Bay, on the east coast of Ireland, he espied a revolving light, but knew not its position. Bewildered with uncertainty, he went down into his cabin and consulted his chart, but it showed no light on St. John's Point. Hence the necessary precaution was not taken, and the vessel was stranded. So the hood-winked, docile Romanist reverently approaches an idol with an intention to fall down before it. The uncorrupted Scriptures hang out a light to warn him of his danger. He consults his Romish guide; but on one hand it strikes out the second Commandment from the Decalogue, which forbids prostration before images; on the other hand it exhibits an example of idol-worship by the prince of God. Jacob, it says, worshipped the top of his staff. And thus the unguarded devotee is betrayed into the sin of creature-worship. "The blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch." In Dr. Hay's "Abridgment of Christian Doctrine," we read:—

"Q.—What is the second command?"

"A.—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

In another Romish work, called the "Mission Book," the Decalogue is mangled thus:—

- “1. One God alone for evermore,
 By faith, and hope, and love adore.
 2. Thou shalt not take his name in vain.
 3. The Lord’s-day thou shalt not profane,” &c.

The tenth command is divided thus :—

9. Thou shalt have no impure desire,
 10. Nor to thy neighbours’ goods aspire.”

Both these works bear the special imprimatur of the Papal Church. That apostate Church therefore stands convicted of wilfully corrupting the word of God.

(2.) To uphold the doctrine of penance, they have translated the word (*metanoete*), which signifies a change of mind, *penance*; so that Luke xiii. 5 is made to read, “Except ye do penance, ye shall all likewise perish.”

(3.) To uphold the doctrine of auricular confession, they have perverted the obvious meaning of James v. 16. Instead of basing on this text the doctrine of the mutual acknowledgment of our faults, the Pope and his clergy have based on it the prying, inquisitorial, and scandalous doctrine of secret and unreserved *confession* on the part of *sisters, daughters, wives, &c.*, to a sworn fraternity of *bachelors*.

(4.) To uphold *waferolatry*, or the worshipping of wafers, they have feigned that, at the Lord’s Supper, when the officiating priest pronounces these words—“This is my body” (Matt. xxvi. 26), the wafer, if the priest *wills* it so, is instantly converted into the flesh and blood, body, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.

(5.) In support of purgatory, they cite 1 Cor. iii. 13—15: “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

But the fire spoken of in this passage refers to the day of judgment, not to a present limbo. Besides, this fire cannot be material, for material fire cannot act on moral qualities, and they are not *men*, but their *works*, which are to pass through this fiery ordeal. As to the expression, "himself shall be saved, yet so as by (or through) fire," it evidently means he shall have a narrow escape, like a man whose life is saved with difficulty, when his house is all in flames about him. The charge of wilfully corrupting the word of God by the Romish Church is sustained by some of her own learned priests. Gavazzi, who disclaims the title of reformer, in his popular lectures says, "The Church of Rome has altered the Bible. Gregory of Valentia, a great divine and authority in the Church of Rome, says, of the Vulgate (a Latin translation of the Bible), 'what is the manner in which the Church and the people must in future conduct themselves? Never must they correct the Vulgate by the original text; but if you have some mistakes and incoherencies in the Vulgate, you must correct the original text by the errors of the Vulgate.' This is the substance of the opinion of Gregory of Valentia. But Father Ungarelli has discovered in the Vulgate, which is received as infallible by the popes, seven hundred and fifty errors, capital errors, altering the true sense of the Bible." These are the men who claim the honour of being the divinely-appointed directors of our consciences!!!

Still greater liberties have been taken with the word of God by Romish missionaries. Idle tales have been worked up with Divine truth, and impudently offered to the heathen as the genuine gospel of Christ. Jeronymo Xavier, missionary to the Indians, was commanded by the Emperor Akbar to translate the four Gospels into Persian, that he might examine their importance as a

system of religion. Xavier undertook this work, and by the assistance of Moulanee Aboos Sitar, a native of La-hoor, he made a history of the life of our Lord, compiled out of the Gospels and from *Popish legends*, and presented it to the Emperor, in 1602, who is said to have smiled at the work: and well he might, as the authentic history was disgraced with fables.* When Luther discovered a Bible in the monastery of Erfurt, and honestly compared its teachings with those of the Romish priesthood, he was amazed to find in how many important instances Popery differed from Christianity. And as he was a man of courage, and learning, and principle, he fearlessly published, and successfully defended the result of his honest convictions. To entire Christendom, this glorious event was like a terrific thunder-storm. From the midst of the thick darkness, the great Reformer shot out lightnings, and the thunder of his voice shook the Papal throne to its centre. Ancient and venerated errors, in an almost endless variety of frightful forms, were made visible. The dense atmosphere which had long been surcharged with poisonous exhalations, was purified and brightened. The excellent of the earth rejoiced more than if their corn and wine had increased; while, on the other hand, the amazement and indignation of Rome knew no bounds. Subtle and determined efforts were made to extinguish the light, to hide the Bible, and to envelope the Church once again in gross darkness. But it was too late. The time to favour Zion had come. God resolved that the cruel deeds of the nocturnal birds of prey should be revealed in the face of the Sun.

3. But what shall we say of Protestant ministers; may

* Dr. A. Clarke's Introduction to his Commentary on the New Testament.

they not be implicitly trusted, as faithful and unerring expounders of the Holy Scriptures? No, verily; for they are but men, and capable of falling into fatal errors. The claims of the parochial clergy on your attention and submission are extravagant. Some of them are not a whit behind the priests of Rome. Commit your souls to their direction, receive their clashing creeds, and obsequiously fall in with their innovations, and they will acknowledge and praise you as dutiful sons of the Church. But search the Scriptures daily, to see whether their teaching and manners agree with the New Testament, and they will not hesitate to condemn you as a captious schismatic, and perhaps endeavour to terrify you with fearful denunciations of Divine vengeance. After all, you may be right and they may be wrong. A collegiate training, Episcopal ordination, sacerdotal robes, State endowments, and Acts of Parliament, are no guarantee for evangelical orthodoxy. Robert Taylor, the notorious infidel, was once a clergyman of the Establishment. Dr. Pusey, the Romish revivalist, is still a dignitary of the Protestant State Church; and it is no secret that a great number of clergymen have lately embraced the errors of Rome, and formally gone over to that community, while numbers remain behind, to contaminate the Protestant faith by their heretical doctrines and popish ceremonies.

But the English Establishment is not the only Reformed Church which has been afflicted and dishonoured by ministerial faithlessness and heresy. Modern expositions of the Scriptures by German divines are strongly impregnated with infidelity. By them, demoniacal possessions are misrepresented as mere physical disorders, and miracles as simple, natural phenomena, which can be accounted for on philosophical principles. Few denominations, indeed,

have been so fortunate as to entirely escape this kind of pestilence. And what does all this instability, apostasy, and heresy on the part of public teachers of religion prove? It proves what we said before, "That no man, nor any order of men, can be safely trusted as the faithful guardians and the infallible interpreters of the Bible."

4. *The reading of the Holy Scriptures should constitute a part of public worship.* This excellent practice was observed with great regularity by the ancient Jews. To this established usage there is a reference in Acts xiii. 15: "And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them (Barnabas and Paul), saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." "The reading of the Pentateuch" (or the first five books of the Old Testament), says Dr. E. Porter, "in such portions as to finish the whole every year, was a long established custom, which Antiochus Epiphanes having forbidden by a sanguinary edict, equal portions of the prophets were substituted; and after the above prohibition was removed, the 'Law and the Prophets' continued to be read in alternate lessons."

The like commendable custom prevailed in the ancient Christian Churches. The reading of the Scriptures, either by the preacher, or some one in his stead, was always an exercise before the sermon; and the subject of the discourse was usually selected from the passage which had just been read. It is scarcely necessary to add, as it is so generally known, that the Scriptures are systematically read, in connection with public worship, by several respectable Protestant denominations in the kingdom at the present day. We should be glad to see this laudable regulation adopted in every religious community. In an

exercise of so vast importance, system is much better than irregularity. But if every Church is not prepared to enjoin the reading of specific portions of the Scriptures for each day throughout the year, yet every Church might make it a rule, that some portion of God's word shall be read at each principal preaching service, at the least. In the pulpit there is imminent danger of attaching too much importance to the word of man, and of not giving due prominence to the word of God. To those who cannot read at all, to inferior readers, and to such as have but very limited opportunities of searching the Scriptures for themselves, the reading of them from the pulpit is urgently necessary, and cannot fail to be highly instructive and interesting. Through this inspired channel of Divine communication they learn, without note or comment, what is the will of God concerning them. By witnessing the supreme deference which is given to the Bible by the minister, they feel their hearts gradually inspired with the same veneration for this blessed book, and are thus instructed to peruse its sacred pages with becoming reverence. Besides, the more familiar they are with the Bible, the better they understand the preacher. If a minister recites or refers to a passage of scripture, in his sermon or prayer, a hearer who is conversant with the Bible, may recollect at once from what source the remarks are drawn ; whereas, a person who knows little or nothing of the word of God, may attribute the same remarks to the preacher's fancy or presumption. I know a preacher who was rather severely censured by one of his illiterate hearers for having asserted that the rich man, at whose gates Lazarus had been laid, was sent to hell for his sins, and tormented with flaming fire. "How," said the hearer, "how does he know that the rich man was sent to hell?"

A very superficial knowledge of the gospel would have convinced the offended hearer that the preacher had derived his information on this awful subject from Jesus Christ.

But in the more cultivated classes of society, whose minds are respectably furnished with human learning, there is a lamentable deficiency of plain, scriptural knowledge. Many intelligent persons prefer light reading, the passing literature of the day, or scientific works, to the Bible; on common, worldly topics they are able to converse sensibly, and feel quite at home; but if you introduce the grand themes of the Bible, they betray evident symptoms of uneasiness, and not unfrequently surprise us by their awkward remarks or interrogations on scriptural subjects. Some time ago I was conversing with a gentleman about the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "What surprises me," said the gentleman, "is, how so many people, for so many years, could find subsistence in a wilderness." The question which puzzled this respectable man would, we should hope, present little or no difficulty to the majority of our Sabbath scholars. To the better educated, therefore, as well as to the illiterate, the reading of the Holy Scriptures in public worship is a necessary service.

Another weighty argument in favour of this practice, is, the word of God is the foundation of all authorised religious exercises. What it positively enjoins is obligatory; what it tolerates, is allowable. On the other hand, what it forbids is wrong. As Protestants, we acknowledge no criterion of moral right and wrong but the Bible. In accordance with this fundamental principle, the Oracles of God should be read in due proportion, in connection with pulpit ministrations.

5. *But if we desire to receive grace through the Holy Scriptures, we must not satisfy ourselves with merely reading them; we must also study them.* The Bible is an extensive gold field, inexhaustibly rich in precious ore. A great deal of shining treasure lies on the surface, so that the most inexperienced miner may soon enrich himself with heavenly treasure, and invest his fine gold in a bank which will never fail, and "where thieves cannot break through and steal." Not so with thousands of adventurers, who encounter the perils of the sea, traverse rugged and almost impassable mountains, and endure incredible hardships, at the scene of operations in California or Australia. Having embarked their all in the adventitious speculation, their only rewards are disappointment, poverty, broken constitutions, regret and untimely graves. How gloriously different is the auriferous field of the gospel. Here is no lottery. No blank mocks the toil of one man, while a valuable prize crowns the speculation of another. All who labour properly in this wonderful region, may realize sudden wealth and happiness. But in the gospel field, there are stores of precious gold, which lie concealed in veins beneath the surface. To come at this horde of treasure, we must dig and delve in deep mines, which are never penetrated by the superficial explorer. If we wish to excel in heavenly treasure, we must be industrious Biblical students, "The diligent hand maketh rich."

6. *But do not misunderstand me. I should be sorry to countenance the idea, that the mere investigation of sacred Truth, however laboriously such an investigation may be conducted, can enrich the soul with saving grace.* It is impossible to investigate the Scriptures with complete success, and with final advantage to ourselves, unless we be assisted by a supernatural Guide.

"Proud learning boasts its skill in vain,
The Sacred Oracles to explain:
It may the literal surface show,
But not the precious mines below.
The saving sense remaineth seal'd,
Till by the Spirit of God reveal'd;
The Book is still unread, unknown,
And opened by the Lamb alone."

Spiritual discernment is the gift of God, and in the absence of this gift, spiritual truths are unintelligible. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The pious Wilberforce invited Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, to hear a sermon by Cecil. The preacher delivered a rich, spiritual discourse, which was highly appreciated by Wilberforce; but the illustrious nobleman complained that "he did not understand a word the preacher said." But if we have the gift of spiritual discernment, but do not possess it in a vigorous and mature degree, we are unable to comprehend the more profound and sublime doctrines of the gospel. To the Hebrews, who had made but little proficiency in the deep things of God, the apostle says, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which are the first principles of the Oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (v. 12—14.)

7. *If we wish to be sound scripturalists and to be lastingly benefited by the word of God, we should peruse it in a spirit*

of seriousness and prayer. Were we to receive a grave epistle from a relative or friend, if we hurried through its contents with carelessness and levity, such conduct would be a reflection on our judgment, and betray a manifest disrespect for our correspondent. And surely the reverence which we owe to Almighty God is not inferior to the respect which is due to an earthly friend. I have often been painfully affected by the irreverent manner in which professing Christians have read or referred to the Holy Scriptures, both in private and in public. As to the derision with which the sacred volume is treated by the profanely wicked, it deserves the severest reprehension. To such, the sentiments expressed by Sir Walter Scott in the following verse, is especially applicable :—

“ Within this awful Volume lies
The mystery of mysteries.
Happiest they of human race
To whom God hath granted grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray;
To lift the latch and force the way :
And better had they ne’er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.”

But it is not sufficient to read the word of God with reverence—it should also be read with earnest prayer. Whenever we engage in reading the sacred page, we should entreat God so to illuminate our minds, and influence our hearts, that our moral perceptions may answer to revealed truth, as face answers to face in a glass. “Open thou mine eyes,” says the psalmist, “that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

The following verses from the sublime hymns of Charles Wesley are fraught with sentiments proper to be cherished in our hearts, when we take into our hands for perusal the oracles of God.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire;
Let me thine influence prove:
Source of the old prophetic fire;
Fountain of life and love.

Come, Holy Ghost, for, moved by thee,
The prophets wrote and spoke;
Unlock the truth, thyself the key;
Unseal the sacred book.

God, through Himself, I then shall know,
If thou within me shine;
And sound, with all the saints below,
The depths of love Divine."

Many revealed truths, and those of a spiritual nature especially, are dark and mysterious to an understanding blinded by sin, while they are clear and bright to a mind that is illuminated by the Sun of Righteousness. "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." If any of you, therefore, "lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i. 5. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

CHAPTER V.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AS A MEANS OF GRACE.

1. Public religious instruction probably a Divine institution in the antediluvian world.
2. In the early patriarchal ages the worship of God was confined, in a great measure, to domestic circles.
3. An interesting account of Ezra's preaching after the Babylonish captivity.
4. The appointment of the twelve apostles to preach the Gospel.
5. Provision made for a proper class of men to succeed the apostles as preachers of the Gospel.
6. The proclamation of the Gospel is a Divine appointment, with a special view to the salvation of sinners.
7. What is implied in the expression, "Preach the Gospel," in our Lord's commission, Matt. xvi. 15.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—
Romans x. 17.

1. *We think it probable that public religious instruction was a Divine institution in the antediluvian world.* Although the holy scriptures afford but very brief sketches of the manners and usages which obtained amongst mankind before the deluge, yet in these very concise outlines we have two distinct notices of preaching. In Jude's epistle we are informed that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, and warned the wicked of the consequences of sin, in the following terms:—"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." The character of this quotation from Enoch's ministry, sufficiently shows that he publicly instructed his contemporaries, under Divine inspira-

tion. Peter calls Noah a preacher of righteousness, and says that to those who in his day were spirits in prison, Christ preached the gospel by that patriarch before the flood. And the prophetic warnings which he uttered of the approaching deluge, are alluded to by Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 7. It is therefore evident that the inhabitants of the old world were privileged with public religious instruction, although such instruction might not be reduced to a regular system.

2.—*In the early patriarchal, ages the worship of God was confined, in a great measure to domestic circles.* The head of each family acted as its priest. Distinguished leaders in the Israelitish Church, nevertheless, occasionally addressed large assemblages of people, whom they convened for the purpose. "Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, in their day, frequently collected the people in solemn assembly, especially at the tabernacle, and addressed them with powerful effect, in the name of the Lord." In the reign of Asa, the great-grandson of Solomon, it is said that Israel had long been "without the true God, and without a teaching priest." 2 Chron., xv. 3. This language implies that at a period long anterior to the days of Asa, some of the priests, if not all of them, were the public instructors of the people, as well as ministers of the altar. In the next reign, Jehosaphat sent out a great number of itinerant preachers, who "taught in Judah, and had the book of the Law with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people." 2 Chron., xvii. 7—9.

3.—*After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, a very interesting account of Ezra's preaching is recorded in the eighth chapter of Nehemiah.* About fifty thousand persons were assembled in the open-air. The

learned scribe, supported by a number of preachers on his right hand and left, stood on an elevated pulpit of wood, When he opened the book of the Law, "all the people stood up," and continued standing during the remainder of the service, which lasted from morning till mid-day. The preachers alternately "read in the book of the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading; and all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law."

"The exercises of the Jewish public worship were prayers, reading the Scriptures, exposition, and miscellaneous exhortation." After the reading service was over, any person was at liberty to speak to the people on any subject which he thought it expedient to bring before them. And as this privilege extended to strangers of the Jewish nation, as well as to residents, it frequently afforded the Redeemer and his apostles a convenient opportunity of addressing public assemblies in the synagogues and in the temple. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of our Lord, came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and "preached in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And as he was an eminently holy man, and delivered his message with an extraordinary unction from above, and supported his pointed and fervent preaching by the most rigid morality; "all the people believed that he was a prophet." Vast multitudes flocked to hear the Baptist preach; and many of them believed his testimony as from God, confessed their sins, received his baptism, and expected the immediate manifestation of the long promised and earnestly wished for Messiah. Thus the ministry of this distinguished herald of Christ was crowned with abundant success.

When our blessed Saviour entered on His public

ministry, He did not found, and confine Himself to, an institution, and merely invite men to hear and receive His doctrine ; but He travelled extensively in Judea, in Samaria, and in Galilee. In His estimation, and He was too wise to err, any ordinary place, on dry land or on the sea, was sufficiently sacred for the purpose of religious instruction. He consequently taught His hearers while He walked with them on the high road, or wherever they happened to be assembled—sometimes from the deck of a ship ; at others from the declivity or summit of a mountain ; in private houses, in synagogues, in the temple ; just as circumstances at the time offered an opportunity. In short, He was instant in season and out of season : and from the facts that “the common people heard Him gladly,” and that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, two members of the supreme council, the apostles, and a great number of disciples, were among His converts, we have reason to believe that many were turned to righteousness, and reconciled to God, by “the gracious words which proceeded out of His lips.”

4.—*In this concise historical sketch of preaching, we have now arrived at an era which is peculiarly interesting to the Christian Church.*—I allude to the appointment of the twelve apostles to this office by Jesus Christ. Having retired to a mountain, and spent “all the night in prayer to God,” after this extraordinary act of devotion, “when it was day, he called to him his disciples ; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles. And he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise

the dead, cast out devils : freely ye have received, freely give." See Matt. x. 1—8, and Luke vi. 12, 13. On this important narrative, which is furnished by the inspired evangelists, I wish to offer the following remarks :—

(1). In setting apart the apostles to their sacred office, our Lord does not appear to have used any specific ceremony of ordination : and consequently that no particular form is essential to a minister's valid appointment to the sacred office. Some officially recognised and uniform method of calling men into the Gospel ministry should, nevertheless, be observed by every Christian community. Where no order is established, the door stands open for the admission of fanaticism, imposture, and confusion.

(2). The word apostle signifies a person sent, or a special messenger. By the ancient Greek historians and poets the word was employed to signify a person who was commissioned by a king to negotiate any affairs between him and any other power or people. So the apostles were the extraordinary messengers of King Messiah, and charged with a commission from Him to negotiate with mankind the affairs of His spiritual kingdom.

(3). The apostles of Christ were chosen from among His disciples. They were His subjects *before* He appointed them to be His ambassadors. If an earthly sovereign has any business to transact at a foreign court, he does not engage the subject of some other power to attend to such business, but he commissions one of his own subjects, in whom he can reasonably confide. And the duly authorized minister of the Gospel is not chosen from the ranks of Satan, but from the loyal subjects of Christ. An ungodly minister is an intruder, a thief, a robber, a wolf in sheep's clothing. (See John x.) And instead of reverencing him for the sake of his office, he

should be deposed immediately from an office which he holds without either right or reason. He is *not* a disciple of Christ, and therefore ought not to be acknowledged as an authorized preacher of the Gospel.

(4). The subject of the apostles' preaching was, "The kingdom of God." But they had not simply to announce the fact that the kingdom of God was at hand. They had also to explain the nature of this kingdom, to set forth its privileges, to enforce its laws, to proclaim Christ as the Sovereign of this kingdom, and to invite mankind to press into it. So they understood their commission; for so they preached, and their preaching was mightily owned by God in the salvation of many souls.

(5). As their mission was extraordinary, and they were the principal heralds employed to publish the new dispensation of the Gospel, and the spiritual reign of Christ, they were endowed with power to work miracles, in confirmation of their Divine mission. But what is a miracle? It is an effect which bears the manifest impress of supernatural agency, or an effect which evidently cannot be produced by mechanical or natural laws. It is the sanction of Almighty God of something which He hath commanded to be said or done. Every miracle, therefore, which the apostles wrought was a Divine attestation to their teaching, and afforded incontrovertible proof that they were neither deceived themselves, nor attempted to deceive others; but that they were acting under the inspiration of God.

(6). At first the ministry of the apostles was confined to their own countrymen. "Jesus commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." But this limitation of the Gospel to the Jews was only for a brief period.

After the more copious effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Christ commissioned his apostles to open the gates of the Gospel kingdom to the Gentiles. "And he said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.) Here is no restriction in reference to any people; no limit to the sphere of their benevolent labours, but that of the human race. The middle wall of partition, which stood for ages between the Jewish and the Gentile nations, by this most merciful commission of Christ, was completely taken down, never more to be rebuilt. "There is now neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Sythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." And all have access by one Spirit to the Father. Under the glorious economy of the Gospel, all the different Gentile nations of the earth have equal privileges with the Jews in sharing the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, and in liberty to approach God as their heavenly Father.

5.—*But as the lives of the apostles were too short, and their number too small, to admit of their travelling all over the world and preaching the gospel to every creature, by what provision was their lack of service to be supplied?* Other duly qualified persons were from time to time ordained for the gospel ministry, as occasion required, and as persons so qualified were raised up in the churches. This statement does not require proof, as it is so clearly and circumstantially narrated in the New Testament. The numerous notices we have of ministers serving churches in the gospel of Christ, in cities and provinces widely apart, and the particular instruction which St. Paul gives in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, in reference to the necessary qualifications and appointment of persons to the ministerial office, amply prove that this view of the subject is correct.

6.—*From the same apostle we learn that preaching the gospel is a Divine appointment with a special view to the salvation of sinners.* “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” It is not, however, by foolish preaching, but by a method which infidels and profane men stigmatize as foolishness, which God, in infinite wisdom sees proper to employ in effecting the salvation of sinners. In accordance with the passage just cited, Paul in his epistle to the Romans, says, “Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” x. 17. And having stated that, “Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” he asks, “But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” verses 13 14. We would on no consideration exalt the preacher at the expense of depreciating the Bible; but as God hath joined them together, no man has authority to put them asunder. Ordain and send forth preachers without the Bible, and what consequences will follow? Scriptural knowledge will decline, ignorance will thrive; rational devotion will fall into disrepute, superstition will revive; the glad tidings of the Gospel in their purity and simplicity will rarely be published, the commandments of men, the traditions of the fathers, ridiculous fables, and lying wonders will be popular, and reputed the only orthodox theology. Beneath the wood, and hay, and straw, and stubble of false doctrine, the gold, and silver, and precious stones of gospel truth, will lie buried out of sight. In the corrupt Church of Rome, whose hostility to the circulation of the Bible is notorious, at different periods of her history, *preaching*, except rarely on occa-

sion of some public festival, was entirely suspended for ages in succession. Instead of enlightening the understandings of the people with the lamp of Divine Truth, she blinded their minds by Latin recitations, fictitious tales, and legerdemain. Instead of feeding their souls with wholesome, nutritious bread, she adulterated their spiritual nourishment with deadly poison. Such was papal Rome when nearly all Christendom acknowledged her supreme sway, and when there was a general famine of the word of God.

On the other hand, translate the Bible into all the languages and dialects of the earth, circulate copies by millions, but send forth no heralds to call attention to them, and to beseech sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; what results will follow? Under such circumstances the Holy Scriptures will be honoured with but few habitual and pious readers. The generality of those who possess the Bible will lock it up in a chest, or thrust it into a corner, or place it on a table—not as a text-Book for daily reference; but as a piece of ornamental furniture, or as a paraded substitute for experimental and practical religion. These are not unwarranted assumptions, which have no foundation in reality; but facts, too well attested by the authentic history of individuals, of families, of villages, and of districts. We do not mean to say that no conversions to God occur without the agency of the preacher; but we have the strongest reasons for believing that such instances are comparatively rare. It is on record that the settlers of Owen's Sound, Canada, were well supplied with copies of the Scriptures—almost every house had a Bible—yet the people continued wretchedly wicked, devoted to sensuality and intemperance; but when the missionary went among

them and proclaimed Christ and Him crucified, they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so, and many who had dwelt carelessly, believed the joyful tidings and embraced salvation. Besides, the living instructor is "set for the defence of the gospel." It is the special province of the preacher to guard the purity of the gospel, to unfold its doctrines, to enforce its commands, and to repel the attacks of its adversaries. And we speak advisedly when we assert that it hath pleased God to magnify the association of His word with ministers, by employing their combined instrumentality in the salvation of myriads of human souls.

7. *Having briefly reminded the reader that preaching the gospel is a divinely appointed means of grace, it may not be altogether unprofitable to notice what is implied in the expression, "Preach the gospel," in our Saviour's commission.*—Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c. The original word *kerux*, which is translated preacher, signifies a public proclaimer. In the profane authors we are informed the term denotes a public herald or crier. An officer of this order used to preside over the Grecian games. It was his duty to proclaim the game, to direct the competitors, to animate them in their contests, to expose the prize for which they contended, and, finally, to give it to the victorious champion. Hence it is the proper office of a herald of salvation to publish the Christian race, to explain the rules of the course, and to encourage those who are engaged in this holy conflict, by pointing them to the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Referring to the ministry of John the Baptist, Rosenmuller says the word which is translated preaching (Matt. iii. 1) "is applied to those who in the streets, fields, and open

air, lift up their voice, that they may be heard by many, and proclaim what has been committed to them by regal or public authority, as the KERUKES among the Greeks, and the PRECONES among the Romans." From other sources we learn that the Grecian heralds were intrusted with the most important missions from generals and kings.

The word *evangelion*, which is translated *gospel*, signifies good tidings. Preaching the gospel of Christ, therefore, signifies publicly proclaiming the good news concerning Christ in all His mediatorial relations to the human family. The reader is desired to bear in mind that the original import of the word *preach*, is not confined to the public verbatim delivery of a message. It includes a far wider range of signification. The specimens of apostolic preaching which are recorded for our instruction, and the topics for preaching enumerated by St. Paul in his letters to Timothy and Titus, show that, while the preacher is bound to declare the whole counsel of God, he is at liberty to employ his talents in publishing that counsel, in all its bearings on mankind in their various relations in life, to the best of his ability.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW TO RENDER PREACHING, AS A MEANS OF GRACE, EMINENTLY USEFUL.

1. The preacher should be a converted man.
2. The subject of preaching should be the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of men, should be the principal topic of the pulpit.
4. The Gospel should be preached faithfully.
5. The Gospel should be preached affectionately.
6. The Gospel should be preached in a plain style.
7. The faithful preacher of the Gospel should expect success, notwithstanding (1) The natural depravity of the human heart. (2) Satanic influence. (3) The example of the world.

"Take heed unto thyself and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."—1 Tim. iv. 16.

1. *The preacher should be a converted man.* Theory, without experience, never did, nor ever will, make a man "an able minister of the New Testament." It is a fixed law in hydraulics, that the stream cannot flow spontaneously above its source. It is a settled maxim in education, that a man cannot teach what he does not know. Nor can a preacher instruct his hearers in the saving mysteries of the gospel kingdom, and sympathize with them in their spiritual hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, while he himself is a stranger to experimental Christianity. He may be as distinguished a master in Israel as was Nicodemus, but like him he will contemplate the regeneration of the soul with amazement, confusion, and unbelief. The system of setting apart and training for the ministry, youths who are entirely destitute of vital godliness, is so anti-scriptural, and so fraught with mis-

chief to the church and to the world, that it deserves the most unqualified condemnation. This scandalous custom reduces the office of the gospel ministry to the rank of a common trade, and obtrudes on the Church of Christ swarms of hirelings from year to year. It is also a fruitful source of lukewarmness, formality, pompous ceremony, intolerance, and schism, by which Christendom is continually disgraced and afflicted. And what is still more appalling, we have reason to fear that this shameful practice has flattered thousands in life, deceived them in death, and conducted them to final ruin, under the sacred profession of guiding them safely to heaven. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? Has not Christ told us that "if the blind lead the blind both will fall into the ditch?" Nor is any amount of moral excellency, short of vital godliness, an effectual substitute for heartfelt religion. When Mr. Wesley went on a mission to America, his mind was well stored with Oxford divinity, and, compared with the generality of the clergy, he was a very good man; but, according to his own account, he was a stranger to the great salvation of the gospel. Having carefully examined himself by the word of God, and attentively marked the lively and victorious faith of more experienced Christians, he discovered the error in which he had so long lived. "And now," he says, "it is upwards of two years since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why (what I least of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never converted myself. I am not mad, though I thus speak; but speak the words of truth and soberness; if haply some of those who dream may awake, and see that, as I am, so are they. Are they

read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same I could do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold I give all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all," &c. Nor was Mr. Wesley the only person in holy orders, who discovered that mere human learning, associated with a fluent utterance, however valuable, was insufficient to qualify a man to fill with success the office of the gospel ministry. On this subject Mr. Berridge says, "When I first came to the University, I applied diligently to my studies, thinking human learning a necessary qualification for a divine, and that no one ought to preach unless he had taken up a degree. Accordingly, I studied the classics, mathematics, philosophy, logic, and metaphysics, and read the works of our most eminent divines. This I did for the space of twenty years; and was all the while departing more and more from the truth as it is in Jesus, vainly hoping to obtain that light from human learning which could only be had from the word of God and prayer." But had gentlemen of the clerical profession been unanimously silent on the question, their silence would not have proved that to be *right* which the Bible declares to be *wrong*. Were all the learning in the Colleges and Universities of Great Britain enlisted on the side of an unconverted ministry, it would merely show to what an extent literary weapons may be wielded in the cause of sin; but the impropriety of setting apart men to preach the gospel, who have never experienced its saving power in their hearts, would remain a stubborn fact, which no sophistry can successfully gainsay.

2. *The subject of preaching should be THE GOSPEL.* All good news is gospel, but all good news is not *the gospel of the Bible*. "All is not gold that glitters." Nor is all "THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD" which is delivered from professedly Christian pulpits. Some preachers have almost entirely discarded the gospel of Christ; and, if we may judge from the common topics of their public discourses, they have either forgotten, or, what is worse, they disregard the nature of their commission; while others throw the gospel on the back ground, and obscure it by giving a prominent view to foreign subjects. "For a considerable period before the Reformation the prevailing themes of the pulpit were, the authority of the mother church, the merits and intercessions of departed saints, the dignity of the blessed Virgin, the efficacy of relics, and, above all, the terrors of Purgatory, and the utility of indulgences. Sermons consisted of quibbles, fables, and prodigies." Ministers of the same fallen Church are still doting about questions which edify not; and, instead of labouring for the conversion of their hearers from Satan to God, they are unceasingly declaiming against heretics, and extolling their own sectarian peculiarities. The supremacy of the Pope, the infallibility of their Church, the power of the clergy, the mediation of saints, the efficacy of sacraments, the glories of the Virgin Mary—are the Alpha and the Omega of their pulpit ministrations.

Go to a Protestant Church, and instead of being charmed with the glad tidings of a peaceful gospel, you will perhaps have to listen to an harangue on apostolical succession—the sanctity of the venerable Establishment—the grace conveyed by baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's Supper—and the wickedness of dissent. Go to a

dissenters' chapel, and instead of being treated with a sermon richly fraught with gospel truths, it is possible you may hear a discourse on the benefits of education—on political abuses—on the anatomy of the human frame, or the magnificence of the starry heaven—subjects which are highly instructive and useful in their place; but they are not the gospel of Jesus Christ. These sciences were familiar subjects of discourse among the ancient heathen, ages before the advent of our Saviour was proclaimed by the angel on the plains of Bethlehem. We wish not to be misunderstood. We neither say nor think it is wrong for a preacher of the gospel to borrow imagery and illustration from the arts and sciences. He may often do this to great advantage. The sacred writings, even when treating on the highest spiritual subjects, everywhere abound with allusions to created objects and national customs. And if "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord, and the firmament showeth his handywork,"—if "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,"—it cannot be improper in the Christian preacher to illustrate his subjects by references to usages which are familiar to his hearers, or to point out occasionally the resemblances and connections which exist between the works of creation and the attributes of the Creator. What we object to is, descanting too frequently or too long on these secondary topics, to the neglect of those fundamental truths which have a direct bearing on the salvation of the soul.

3.—*Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of men, should be the principal topic of the pulpit.* This is emphatically "The gospel—" the joyful tidings of salvation. From the

numerous doctrines of Christianity, Paul selected "Christ and Him crucified," as his favourite theme. When he opened his mission in the wealthy and fashionable city of Corinth, he resolved not to gratify the literary tastes of her inhabitants, or to feed their passion for human eloquence; but to explain and recommend to them, in a plain, unaffected style, the doctrines of the cross. In his second epistle to the church in that city, he says, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Having admonished them for their party zeal and schismatical contentions, he reminds them, that "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On Him, and on Him only, can the sinner safely build his hopes and expectations of heaven. The same apostle, after having cautioned the Galatians against the wiles of Judaizing teachers, says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." While the unbelieving Jew gloried in his descent, in a direct line of succession from Abraham, and expected salvation through circumcision and sacrifice; the apostle looked to Calvary, and enjoyed "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, in Christ Jesus."

Having given the Philippians the watch-word against the vain-glorious Jews, he exclaims in a strain of holy exultation, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he

might trust in the flesh, I more ; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." So wrote, and so preached the great apostle of the Gentiles. "The unsearchable riches of Christ" were the glorious themes of his inspired epistles, and of his soul-converting sermons.

Nor was Paul the only apostle who gloried in the cross of Christ. They all with one accord, wherever they went preaching the kingdom of God, whether among their own countrymen or the heathen, laboured intensely to fix the attention of their hearers on the crucified Saviour of the world. "The Jews," says Paul, "require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." After the apostles had been imprisoned at Jerusalem by the high priest, and miraculously delivered by an angel, they were brought before the supreme council and reprimanded for their conduct, then scourged, and "commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus." But so far were they from not daring to preach in His name, that "daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not

to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Had the apostles contented themselves with preaching even the sublime morality of the gospel, and treated the Author of this morality with silence, or referred to Him with studied ambiguity, they might have been quietly suffered by "the powers that be." But these undaunted champions, at the hazard of their lives—in the temple, in the synagogue, from house to house, in the streets and lanes of the city, and in the highways, ceased not to elevate Christ, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," that all might see, believe, and live. These devoted messengers of peace relied on their Divine Master with unwavering confidence—they loved Him with supreme affection, and their zeal for His glory was ardent. Constrained by these heavenly principles, they proclaimed Him, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of mankind, in defiance of persecution and death.

Let every preacher of the gospel go and do likewise. There is a fire in the doctrines of the cross which can melt the most obdurate heart—a charm, which can attract the most wayward affections ; and an eloquence which can persuade the most rebellious will to be reconciled to God. These sentiments are beautifully and forcibly expressed by the great Wesleyan bard in the following lines:—

"Come let us try if Jesu's love
Will not with joy inspire us ;
This is the theme of those above,
This upon earth shall fire us.
Jesus's name the dead can raise ;
Show us our sins forgiven ;
Fill our souls with th' life of grace ;
Carry us up to heaven."

In the various Churches around us, thousands and tens of

thousands, who were once far from God and original righteousness, have been reclaimed and brought near to Him, through the blood of the cross. In benighted lands, too, reckless heathens have been arrested, softened, and subdued, by the simple story of the cross, when other doctrines of the Bible failed to engage their serious attention. For a long time missionaries laboured in Greenland without any perceptible success. The self-denying pioneers of the gospel to those dreary regions, took great pains to instruct the people. For these benevolent services they were very ill-treated, and their message of mercy was disregarded. After having laboured among the careless Greenlanders many years, without witnessing any fruit, the following circumstances occurred :—Some of the people came to one of the missionaries ; he spoke to them on the creation of the world, the fall of man, of our misery in consequence of sin, and of our redemption through Jesus Christ. In speaking on our redemption, he was enabled to describe the sufferings and death of the Redeemer with more than ordinary energy. At the same time he read to them, from the New Testament, the history of our Saviour's agony in the garden. On hearing this affecting narrative, one of the savages stepped up to the table, and in an earnest manner exclaimed, "How was that! Tell me that once more ; for I also would fain be saved."

In 1817, Simeon Wilhelm, a West African youth was at a Mission establishment in London, where he died in the course of a few months after his arrival in England. "When he was told," says his biographer, "that Jesus Christ loves black people as well as white, and died for them on the cross, and now lives in heaven to pray for them,—this love of Christ seemed to touch Simeon's

heart more than anything else ; and he could not refrain from many tears." This wonderful story still exerts an astonishing influence on the human heart ; by its powerful attractions multitudes, in different parts of the world, are added to the Church daily, such as are saved : and millions of His followers feel their affections steadily drawn, concentrated, and fixed on Him, as the Author and Finisher of their faith. Look with an unbiassed mind at the state of any Church under ordinary circumstances, whose ministry is strongly characterized by the doctrines of the cross, and what do you see? You see what is desirable above all other things—*spiritual prosperity*. Look now at any other community, by whose ministry these doctrines are perverted or but seldom touched, and what do you see? You see that, which of all things is to be dreaded—*spiritual declension*. There may be a beautiful sanctuary—an intelligent congregation—a talented preacher—charming music—and imposing services. But to this fine combination of worldly respectability, there is a fearful counterpoise—" *The glory is departed.*" Christ being kept in the shade, the copious effusions of His grace are judiciously withheld. Conversions "are few and far between;" and the faithful among the flock, beholding so imperfectly the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—instead of being changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord, make but little proficiency in Christian perfection. If, therefore, we wish for preaching to be a means of eminent success, we must not fail to duly set forth Christ, in all His mediatorial relations to the human family. If this does not secure success, other expedients will be tried in vain.

4. *The gospel should be preached faithfully.* To the prophet Isaiah God said, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their trans-

gression, and the house of Jacob their sins." In this passage the prophet is not commanded to preach to the Jews about the wickedness of the surrounding nations; but to pourtray their own characters, that they may see their faces as in a glass, and know what manner of men they are. In the same direct and pointed manner the message of God to men should be delivered now. The preacher of the gospel is a watchman upon the walls of Zion, and his responsible office binds him to apprise the people of their danger, in the most effectual manner of which he is capable. Those who are at ease in Zion, or who are indolently sauntering about her suburbs, are so unwilling to be disturbed, that they would not have the watchman sound an alarm, although they are every moment threatened with destruction. But neither the subject nor the manner of the preacher's discourse must be regulated by the inclinations of his unawakened hearers. Their interests require that they be told—not what they prefer; but what they need—whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. The preacher cannot knowingly shun to declare the whole counsel of God, without placing his own salvation in jeopardy. "Son of man," saith the Lord, "thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." This is a tremendous announcement to the man who handles the word of the Lord deceitfully.

But what inducements has a preacher to be unfaithful in the fulfilment of his mission? He may be awed by the fear of man. Some hearers are very cruel to their

spiritual instructor. Let him please them well in all things, then they will stand at his right hand and support him with their patronage and influence. But if he shows them no partiality—if he pointedly denounces those sins and follies to which they are addicted, they withdraw their friendship from him, charge him with dealing in personalities, and would be glad to see him make way for a successor, who would be more indulgent to their failings. There was a time when the Galatians admired the apostle Paul so passionately, that had it been possible they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him; but they appear to have been subsequently so affronted by his faithful dealings with them, that he was led to inquire, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” But Paul was not the man to be terrified into unfaithfulness by the frowns of mortals. When he expounded the word of God before Felix and Drusilla, who were persons of infamous character, he neither flattered their pride, nor spared their crimes. Paul was Felix’s prisoner, and if he offended his judge, he knew not what consequences would follow. In this perilous situation the ambassador of God rose superior to the fear of man, and “reasoned on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”—subjects which were admirably adapted to the moral character of his dignified hearers. This instance of moral courage on the part of the apostle was the more remarkable, as John the Baptist had recently lost his head through his ministerial fidelity. While John said nothing which had a special bearing on Herod’s conduct, “Herod heard him gladly.” But when the Baptist laid his hand on that licentious king’s conscience, and said, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife,” to gratify his guilty paramour, “the king sent and beheaded John in prison.”

Another thing which operates against direct preaching, is a misdirected kindness cherished in the heart of the preacher. So anxious is he to draw his hearers to Christ by the cords of love, and so reluctant is he to wound their feelings, that he rarely appeals to their fears, by proclaiming in strong and pointed terms "the terrors of the Lord." And when he does venture to discourse on the wages of sin and everlasting punishment, he studiously expresses his sentiments in the most mild and inoffensive language, as though he were preaching to a select assembly of nervous ladies. Whatever meed of praise we may award to such a preacher for his gentleness, we cannot admire him for his energetic fidelity. "Learn of me," says our blessed Lord; "I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." But notwithstanding the meekness of His spirit, He did not hesitate to paint sin in its proper colours, nor to warn the sinner of his danger, in the most pointed and impressive manner. If to the broken-hearted He was "a Son of consolation," to the unbelieving and impenitent He was "a Son of thunder." His guilty hearers could not but feel that He was preaching to them. It is, however, proper to remark that Jesus Christ sometimes used language of rebuke which would not become any other person, because He was more than man, and was the only preacher who could search the hearts and try the reins of His hearers.

5. *To engage the hearts of hearers, the gospel should be preached affectionately.* There is a peculiar incongruity in publishing the glad tidings of the gospel in a strain of indignation. If a preacher frowns, and scolds, and threatens his hearers with eternal fire, in the hardest language which he can command, and declares at the

top of his voice that he is determined to clear his blood of them, it will be well if his moroseness and vociferation do not harden some of them in their sins. If we give him credit for the purity of his motive, and commend him for his earnestness, we cannot approve of the harsh style of his address. We do not desire him to soften God's truths or to smoothen his tongue, and accommodate his manner and expression to the vitiated taste of fastidious hearers. We desire nothing of the kind. Were he to fall into these errors, he would incur the charge of handling the word of the Lord deceitfully; but we do wish he would avoid a method of preaching which exposes him to the suspicion that he has not the common feelings of humanity. The preacher should never forget that he himself was once led captive by the devil at his will, and consequently liable to all the horrors of hell. And the recollection of these awful facts should inspire his soul with sympathy and compassion for those who are now in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. While he faithfully utters the thunders of a violated law, and "justifies the ways of God to man," he should manifest an earnest desire that the transgressor may find immediate refuge from the impending storm. No man was more cruelly treated by his countrymen than was Paul; yet he was so far from cherishing any hard feelings towards them, that he showed the tenderest concern for their welfare. They falsely accused him—they pursued him from place to place with the most malignant designs—they repeatedly scourged and stoned him—they secretly conspired to assassinate him—more than forty of them bound themselves by an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had murdered him. After all this barbarous treatment he would have cheerfully laid down his life for their salvation. In the most solemn manner,

he testifies how intensely he yearns over them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great sorrow and continual anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen after the flesh." He does not say, my inveterate enemies, my murderous persecutors; but "my brethren, my kinsmen after the flesh." Such was the profound and unaffected concern which Paul felt for perishing Jews. And no man will accuse this holy and zealous apostle of unfaithfulness.

We have still finer examples of affectionate preaching, and compassion towards perishing sinners, in One who is greater than Paul. What a gracious spirit, and what a captivating sweetness there is in our Lord's sermon on the mount. No marvel that "the common people heard him gladly," and "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips." And who can conceive what He felt when He shed tears over obstinate Jerusalem, at the contemplation of its approaching ruin? "And as he drew near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes." From these examples it is evident that the greatest tenderness is consistent with inflexible fidelity. Nor should the former qualification ever be sacrificed to the latter. Let the Gospel trumpet invariably utter a certain sound; but let its intonations be modulated by the law of kindness.

6.—*The Gospel should be preached in a plain style.*—Words are pictures of ideas. If they are unintelligible it is impossible for them to represent distinctly those thoughts

which they are designed to convey. If the plate of a looking-glass is perfectly level and clear, it will reflect an accurate likeness; but if it is waved or knotted, it will exhibit nothing but distorted images. It is just the same with language. A sermon, every sentence of which is understood distinctly, is a clear and faithful transcript of the preacher's sentiments, provided he expresses his views accurately. But a discourse which is fraught with unusual terms and knotty forms of expression, exhibits to many of his hearers nothing but a succession of deformed pictures. A few, perhaps, admire the preacher for his *learned barbarism*, and mistake his darkness for depth; but the more sensible part of the congregation feel ashamed of his affectation, or lack of judgment. It is a vulgar prejudice to regard an elaborate style as an indication of superior learning. A man of very superficial attainments may easily charge his memory with a collection of hard words, and profusely besprinkle his diction with them to the amazement of the illiterate. On the other hand, profound learning is very frequently associated with the greatest simplicity. During my residence in London, I occasionally listened with great delight and profit to some of the most talented ministers, both natives and foreigners, every one of whose preaching was characterized by a clear and an easy style. Dr. A. Clarke was a giant in literature; but however profound and elevated his thoughts, he was never "hard to be understood." One of the most honourable compliments which was ever paid to a great scholar, was unwittingly paid to the Doctor by a poor woman in the Zetland Isles. She had heard of his celebrity, and went to hear him at Lerwick. On her return home, she remarked with mingled simplicity and surprise, "They say that Dr. Clarke is a learned man, and I

expected to find him such ; but he is only like another man, for I could understand every word he said." A tribute of praise of the same kind was once paid undesignedly to Mr. Wesley. It is admitted by competent judges that Mr. Wesley was an accomplished scholar. But like good Archbishop Usher, he employed his stores of learning in simplifying truths which otherwise would have been obscure and complex. In his advanced age, some men attributed the plainness of his style to intellectual decline. But they mistook the man, and the dignified motives by which he was influenced. In reply to their criticism and apology, Mr. Wesley said, if he did not use a more learned style, it was not because he *could* not do it, but because he *durst* not do it ; and that he *durst* no more use a fine style in preaching than wear a fine coat.

We never admired fashionable garments in the pulpit, but we would much rather hear a plain discourse by a well-informed minister in the richest broadcloth, manufactured into the ordinary costume of his country, than have our understanding perplexed by an unintelligible sermon associated with the plainest vestments. When we listen to a public speaker, we wish not only to hear what he *says*, but to know also what he *means*. What some people regard as brilliant sermons, are like richly stained windows : they serve for purposes of decoration, but they always shut out light. One of the fundamental rules on good speaking or writing is PERSPICUITY, or clearness. Professed masters of the art lay it down as a maxim, that "this should never be sacrificed to any other beauty." "Simplicity," says a celebrated teacher of pulpit eloquence, "requires the preacher never to use a hard word when a plain one will express his meaning." Some preachers, and especially youthful preachers, reverse this

order : they never seem willing to express their meaning in plain words, if they can array them in hard or fine ones. In some cases this grave fault is doubtless the offspring of vanity. In other cases, we think, it is an error in judgment. Intellectual superiority is confounded with a flowery, high sounding diction. The consequence is, the preacher excels in *sound*, but he is deficient in *sense*. I once heard an uneducated but sensible woman say, "I have been to Alston to hear Mr. T. preach. I liked him well, but I did not understand half he said." Poor woman ! If she was delighted with what she *did* understand, how much more delighted would she have probably been had she comprehended what she did *not* understand ? Mr. T. was then a worthy young man of promising talent ; but like too many of his age and profession, he had contracted the bad habit of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge."

It is a dictate of common sense, that instruction should invariably aim at the enlightenment of the instructed. But light cannot be conveyed through a dark medium. If therefore we wish to transmit luminous thoughts from our own minds to the minds of our hearers, we must convey them in luminous words. Tones and significations are two distinct things. If a band of musicians wish merely to gratify the ears of an audience, they can do this with "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals ;" but if they wish to communicate a knowledge of poetry, they must lay aside their instruments, and speak to the understanding.

If a lady wishes to decorate her mantel-piece or side-board with glass ornaments, she may consistently select those which are flowered and figured in every devisable form, and in the highest style of art, because they are designed for show. But spectacles and telescopes, which

are intended to assist vision, must be as smooth and clear as crystal. And what is language but a convention? telescope, invented for the express purpose of enabling us to see each other's thoughts? Duly impressed by this principle, the good speaker will imitate the optician, whose first object is to secure clearness—ornament is an after consideration. Were he to venture, in the manufacture of his instruments, to prefer ornament to utility, he would soon find out his mistake; for none but simpletons would patronize him, and bankruptcy would quickly be the recompense of his foolish innovation. Suppose a gentleman has a piece of land which he desires to convert into pleasure grounds, he must send for the landscape gardener, and instruct him to lay it out tastefully, and plant it with trees, and shrubs, and flowers, according to the most approved rules of his art. But if the land is to be turned to profit, it must be broken up by the ploughshare, or laid down for pasture. So if a speaker wishes to display his lexicographical skill, he may thickly stud his language with difficult terms, new fangled phrases and maxims in foreign tongues, but if he desires to instruct and edify his hearers, his first care must be to be understood. Like Solomon's preacher he must "find out acceptable words," words which clearly express his meaning, and which the people comprehend. Nor should he presume that what is familiar to himself is familiar to them. A reasonable estimate of their intellectual attainments should fix the standard of his style. If a public speaker makes a laboured display of his acquirements on any occasion it betrays a lack of humility. To intelligent hearers it is an insult, for he seems to think they will mistake pedantry for solid learning. But when a self-sufficient man ascends the awful pulpit, and shrouds the sublime truths of the Gospel in a cloud of verbal

pomp, if we hope he means well, it is difficult to resist the temptation, that he is more concerned for his reputation as a speaker, than for the spiritual benefit of his hearers. His knowledge of men may be limited, but a little reflection would be sufficient to convince him that they cannot derive profit from what they do not understand, and that they cannot understand language to which they have not been accustomed. They may be his superiors in common sense and general experience; but in this particular—the knowledge of uncommon words—he rises above them, simply because on this branch of knowledge they have bestowed but little attention, while with him it is a favourite study. And it is surely no extraordinary act of condescension on our part, to express ourselves intelligibly to a listening throng, who are devoutly looking up to heaven for a blessing through our ministrations.

Simplicity in preaching is more necessary than it is in writing. If we do not understand an author, we can pause, reflect, consult our dictionary, or solicit the aid of a friend; but if we cannot understand a preacher, decorum forbids us to interrupt him, and demand an explanation. Whether we comprehend his meaning or not, we must patiently allow him to proceed. As the blind man, who was partially restored to sight, “saw” moving “men as trees walking,” so we, surrounded by alternate light and darkness, can form but a confused view of the pictures which the mysterious orator is presenting to the eye of our minds. The Apostle Paul was no mean scholar. Educated at the feet of Gamaliel, with a mind enriched with Jewish and Grecian literature, and accustomed to public speaking, he was qualified to entertain critics, poets, and philosophers, and to shoot quite over the heads of the

uneducated. But the illustrious man had more grace and wisdom than to be guilty of this vanity. He durst not indulge the thought of proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation in lofty and perplexing strains. He knew that the glorious news of the gospel would be most advantageously published in a style harmonizing with their own admirable simplicity; and that no ostentatious display of learning which he was able to make could adorn the native sublimity of the Bible. As instruments of enlightening the mind and converting the soul, this learned and inspired herald of Christ had infinitely more confidence in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, than he had in the words which the wisdom of man teacheth. "Now," says the apostle, "we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

The Corinthians were a learned people; they cultivated the refinements of language with diligence; and, like the rest of the Greeks, held the eloquent orator in the highest admiration. These facts were well known to Paul. But when he reared the standard of the cross in the Achaian capital, did he endeavour to establish his fame and introduce Christianity by rivalling the Grecian orators? Hear his own reply—"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not

stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Epistle ii. 1, 2, 4, 5.) Had the apostle studiously cultivated rhetoric, and proclaimed the Gospel in the style of Grecian oratory, his success might have been ascribed to the charms of his eloquence, rather than to the force of the truths which he published. But the dignified simplicity with which he delivered and defended his message from God obviated such a conclusion. It very frequently occurs, that public speakers who feel a secret pride in dazzling their audience with a glitter of words, unwittingly betray a lamentable deficiency of connection and richness in their sentiments. The speeches and sermons of such men remind us of counterfeit sovereigns: within they are nothing but base metal, without they are resplendent with precious gold. Among simple folk they pass for sterling coin; experienced men detect the fraud through the superficial covering.

But we do not wish our animadversions on pedantry to be misinterpreted. We are no advocates for provincialisms and broken English. Barbarity is not simplicity. A low, corrupt dialect is necessarily more or less obscure to general hearers. Or if it be intelligible, it is far from being agreeable. It is well that it is so. There is an intimate connection between language and character. Words are signs of ideas. They serve as an index to our intellectual standard. They are the grand channels through which the greatest and holiest minds are continually pouring streams of instruction, to enlighten and elevate the human race. A soul which is conversant with only low and vulgar words is degraded with grovelling and sordid thoughts. A stranger to pure and elevated language, she finds it difficult to rise superior to the debasing elements of this sinful world, and to indulge in sublime con-

temptation. The vile slang which prevails among the dregs of society vastly contributes to the corruption of morals. The refined licentiousness of the stage has converted the theatre into a hotbed of vice. Extravagant puffing in commercial circles has created a shocking disregard for truth and punctuality. And the quaintness, burlesque, and coarseness in which some preachers indulge, and which are so directly at variance with the holiness and dignity of the gospel, have seriously retarded the intellectual and spiritual advancement of Christian churches. While, therefore, we are ashamed for those preachers of the Gospel who prefer fine things to useful things, and who sacrifice sense to sound, we are shocked at the vulgarity of those ministers who glory in their shame, and employ a diction which is more befitting the harlequin, or the uncultured clown, than the ambassador of God. Simplicity and dignity should uniformly characterize the style of the pulpit. These excellent qualities will be materially promoted by the cultivation of enlightened benevolence and personal "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

7. *The preacher of the gospel should expect success.* The numerous and complicated discouragements under which the preacher of the gospel has to discharge his sacred duties, frequently puts his confidence in the ultimate success of his ministry to a severe test. The brutal behaviour of savage persecutors—the scoffs of the profanely wicked—the conceited criticisms of captious disputants—the stoical indifference of formalists—and the instability of professing Christians;—are sources of unutterable grief and anxiety to the ambassador of Jesus Christ. Obstructions to the progress of the gospel are innumerable, and present themselves in an endless variety of forms

and modifications. To attempt a complete classification of these obstructions, would therefore be useless. They may nevertheless be reduced to the following leading heads:—
The natural depravity of the human heart, and satanic influence.

(1.) *The natural depravity of the human heart.* By this, we mean the sinful state in which mankind are born, and in which they remain till they are renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is of no consequence to our argument, whether this state of soul be designated original sin, inbred sin, hereditary corruption, moral disease, or a state of nature. The doctrine expressed by these phrases is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures. In Adam we all die, because in Adam we all sinned. And we all sinned in Adam in the same manner as Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec in Abram. Heb. vii. 9, 10. If it be objected that this doctrine is surrounded with impenetrable mystery, what then? Is the fact thereby invalidated? Certainly not. How the ground on which we tread could be originally modified into human beings, and how millions of individuals have sprung from a single pair, no man living can comprehend; but the facts are incontrovertible. The same remarks apply to the native depravity of the human heart. The thing itself is a divinely attested fact, corroborated by our own observation and experience. But the precise manner of the thing transcends our comprehension. In this degenerate state, the human soul is prone to evil, averse to good, and at enmity with God. And so long as it continues in this rebellious state, it stands as a strong fortress against the operations of the gospel.

(2.) *Another formidable obstruction to evangelical truth is satanic influence.* Some of the greatest crimes by which the infant Church of Christ was dishonoured, are attributed

to infernal agency. Judas did not betray his Lord and Master till Satan entered into his heart. Ananias and his wife did not agree to lie unto the Holy Ghost, till Satan had filled their hearts with his evil influence, and instigated them to the dreadful deed. As to the world of careless sinners, it is lulled in the arms of the wicked one, as a slumbering child is carried in the arms of its nurse; and every individual sinner is led captive by the devil at his will. And as the special object of a preached gospel is the overthrow of Satan's empire, it is reasonable to suppose that he will concentrate his influence, and direct it with all the skill and force which he can command, against the heralds of salvation. What reason infers the Scriptures reveal. "For we wrestle not," says the Apostle Paul, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places." The prince of devils, therefore, and his infernal confederates combine to thwart the benevolent designs of the gospel, and to render the word of God of none effect. Eph. vi. 12. 2 Cor. ii. 11. The obstructions which inherent and practical wickedness present to the progress of holiness among men, are formidable beyond calculation; but they are not insurmountable. In defiance of all opposing elements the truth of God will prevail.

CHAPTER VII.

CONFIDENCE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY IS WARRANTED BY ANCIENT PROPHECY—BY DIVINE ASSURANCE — BY INSPIRED HISTORICAL TESTIMONY— BY THE PAST HISTORY OF THE CHURCH—BY THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IN OUR OWN TIMES, IN NEW ZEALAND, THE POLYNESIAN ISLANDS, THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR.

1. Our confidence in the success of the Gospel ministry is warranted by ancient prophecy. (2) By Divine assurance. 3. The success of the Gospel is largely related in the inspired history of the infant Church. (1) The personal preaching and success of Jesus Christ. (2) The extraordinary success of the apostles, notwithstanding the opposition of different classes of self-interested opponents. (3) The rapid diffusion of Christianity was not confined to apostolic times. 4. The success of the Gospel in our own times. (1) The introduction of Christianity into New Zealand. (2) Appalling testimony of the savage character of the uncivilized New Zealanders. (3) Their cruelty to strangers. (4) The happy change which the Gospel has effected among them. 5. The successful labours of John Williams and his compeers in the Polynesian Islands. 6. Glorious success of the Gospel among the coloured population of the West Indies. 7. The power of the Gospel wonderfully manifest in Africa.—Thrilling account by Robert Moffatt of the extraordinary conversion of Africaner. 8. The mighty influence of the Gospel in Madagascar.

“ But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.”—Numbers xiv. 21.

1. *By ancient prophecy.*—David, Isaiah, Daniel, Joel, and Malachi predict, in glowing terms, the superior splendour of the Gospel dispensation. The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow were foretold many centuries before our Saviour's incarnation. The sublimest strains of inspired poetry, the most striking imagery, and the grandest descriptions were employed by the ancient

seers to set forth in glowing colours the glories of the latter day. The kingdom of God, or the empire of grace under the government of Jesus Christ, though feeble and obscure in its commencement, had to increase in extent, in grandeur, and in happiness, throughout all time; and in its heavenly state to flourish with unfading splendour, duration without end.

In the seventh chapter of Daniel's prophecies, the universality, magnificence, and perpetuity of Messiah's kingdom is distinctly foretold: "I saw," says the prophet, "in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." In the second chapter of the same book, the origin of the gospel kingdom is represented under the figure of "a stone which was cut out of a mountain without hands"—which stone, contrasted with the great mountain, was diminutive and insignificant. The stone, notwithstanding, shall break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms which are hostile to it, and it shall stand for ever. The import of this prophetic imagery is, the doctrines and influence of Christianity shall utterly overthrow idolatry throughout the globe.

"Of the increase of Messiah's government and peace," says Isaiah, "there *shall* be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." This illustrious prophecy was confirmed by Gabriel

to the blessed virgin in the following announcement:—
 “Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke i. 31—33. As David was a type of Christ, so his kingdom was a type of the kingdom of grace. This kingdom the God of heaven set up, and invested the government thereof in the hands of His Son. And so firm is its foundation, so just and merciful are its laws, so righteous is its administration, so wise and powerful are its aggressive movements against all unrighteousness, that without annihilating the political codes and various forms of earthly governments, it will progressively leaven the human family with its transforming influence, and gradually extend its borders till all “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”—Rev. xi. 15. Well-instructed and unwavering faith, contemplating these glorious realities, triumphantly exclaims, ALLELUIA, THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH.—Rev. xix. 6.

2. *The success of the gospel is guaranteed by Divine assurance.*—God hath graciously pledged Himself to bless and prosper the faithful publication of His saving truth. The same Divine Spirit that moved the prophets to foretell the future prosperity of the Christian Church, will so arrange and direct the operations of His providence and grace, that He will infallibly secure the fulfilment of His own predictions. His word is settled in heaven to all generations. And sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle of His word shall fail.

Stumbling stones and rocks of offence may be rolled in the way of truth; but Omnipotence will crush and scatter to the winds every obstruction. If the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed, God will hold them in derision, confound their counsel, and take the wise in their own craftiness. If the preaching of the gospel were not divinely authorized, we might doubt the legitimacy of the measure. Or if God had not engaged to bless this means of grace to the souls of them that hear it, we might question the efficiency of a preached gospel for the purposes of human salvation. But we are distinctly informed that "faith cometh by hearing," that the gospel is emphatically "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and we have the pledge of God, that the saving unction of His Holy Spirit shall accompany the faithful publication of His message of grace to mankind. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isaiah lv. 10, 11. We receive this beautiful passage of scripture as a glorious assurance, that God will reward His faithful ambassadors with seals to their ministry, and souls to their hire. Away then foreboding fears! The servant of God shall not labour in His Master's vineyard in vain. He may go forth weeping bearing precious seed; but he shall doubtless come again, bringing his sheaves with him rejoicing. Instead of the thorn the fir tree shall appear, and instead of the briar the myrtle shall spring up. The solitary

place shall be glad, the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, and the desolate waste shall become fruitful as the garden of Eden.

3. *The success of the gospel is largely related in the inspired history of the infant church.*

1. The public ministry of Jesus Christ was of very limited duration, and extended over not more than three or four years. During the brief period that he went about doing good, the governors of the Jewish Church and the rulers of the state combined to thwart His benevolent designs, and to neutralize his labours of love. But grace and truth in numerous instances triumphed over prejudice and malice. While priests and rulers maligned the Redeemer's character, accused Him of blasphemy, and furiously vociferated, "away with him! crucify him! for he ought not to live," the common people heard him gladly, and many of them became his devoted followers. Nor were his disciples exclusively gathered from among the poor of this world. A few from the ranks of the noble and honourable received him as a teacher sent from God. Of this class we may notice Zaccheus, of Jericho, the wealthy collector of the public revenue; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who were members of the supreme council of the Jewish nation.—Luke xix. 1—9; John xix. 38—42; Matt. xxvii. 57. We are disposed to believe that the number of converts under the personal ministry of our blessed Lord is greatly underrated. When we read of the wilful blindness of the Jewish people, of their obstinate unbelief and inveterate hatred to Christ, we are extremely liable to overlook the fact, that to this dreadful state of the people as a nation, there were many honourable exceptions. In the day when the Lord shall make up His jewels, we doubt not that thousands will

appear at the right hand of God, who were converted from the error of their ways by the personal ministry of Jesus Christ.

But He never attempted to win converts by appealing to the people's political views or selfish passions. Artful attempts were made to draw from His lips some definite expression of the sentiments which he held respecting the earthly government to which Judea was then subject. But to the various questions which were proposed to Him on this point, He only returned general answers, which were founded on reason and equity. And He was so far from alluring the people to become His disciples by promises of worldly ease, and honour, and wealth, that He told them plainly, the religion which He inculcated required the entire renunciation of sin, severe self-denial, the sacrifice of many things which had long been near and dear to their hearts, courage to brave the most appalling dangers, and fortitude to sustain the fiercest persecutions. The glorious rewards which He held out to His followers were not earthly, but heavenly, in their character; and were to be enjoyed—not in this world, but in the world to come. No man, therefore, can rationally attribute their conversion to any low or secular consideration. While the efficient cause of their turning to God was the influence of divine grace on their hearts, the motive causes, on their part, were godly sorrow for sin, love to Christ, and devotion to His will.

2.—*We may next glance at the extraordinary success of a preached gospel by the apostles.* When this holy band of ministers received a commission from their Divine Master to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, under what kind of circumstances did they open their mission? Widely different from those which exist

in Christian countries at the present day. As subjects of an enlightened, independent, Protestant state, and surrounded as we are by a richly endowed Church, we can form but a very imperfect idea of the difficulties and dangers which beset the apostles, in the discharge of their sacred duties. They were not clothed with those artificial honours and titles which now distinguish the dignitaries of certain Churches. Among them there was no pope, no cardinal, no metropolitan bishop, no primate of all palestine, no right reverend father in God, no most reverend, no very reverend, no archbishop, no venerable archdeacon, no rector, no vicar. But there were Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and Barnabas. No princely incomes constituted their "livings." Gold and silver they had none. And although they had a Divine right to bodily support from those to whom they broke the bread of eternal life, they sometimes laboured with their own hands to supply their temporal necessities. The Church of Christ, in the apostolic age, was not unequally yoked with the State. It was not established by law and made the exclusive religion of any land, so far as such things *can* be effected by human authority. On the contrary, the Jewish rulers and the Gentile kings combined to accomplish its destruction. On other subjects they were as opposite to each other as the poles of the earth; but on this point they were wonderfully agreed. Not a crowned head had taken Christianity under his protection, or avowed himself a convert to the gospel. "The powers that be," either despised the efforts of the apostles, as the contemptible ebullitions of babbling demagogues, or resolved to crush them by brutal force.

Another class of fierce opponents with whom the apostles had to contend were priests, both Jewish and Pagan.

The Jewish priesthood had taken a prominent part in the crucifixion of Christ, and being resolved to maintain the course which they had taken in this tragical affair, they conspired to silence the apostles, as the most effectual means of preventing the publicity of the atrocious murder of which they had been guilty. Another consideration with many of them, doubtless, was the gospel of Christ declared that the dispensation of the Law was disannulled by the introduction of a new and better covenant. Moses must give place to Jesus Christ; and the Levitical priest to the herald of the gospel. Compulsory tithes for a sacerdotal order must be discontinued, and the ministers of religion must be supported by *voluntary contributions*. A splendid ritual, associated with numerous bloody sacrifices, must be succeeded by a mode of worship remarkable for its simplicity and spirituality, and the worshipper must rely for atonement on the blood of Christ exclusively. Under the new dispensation there is no other sacrifice for sin than that which has been already offered on the cross for every soul of man. For these mighty changes the sons of Levi were not prepared. The sanctity of their office, the dignity of their order, their influence, both in Church and State, their ample revenues, their educational prejudices, but above all, the depravity of their hearts pleaded strongly for things to continue as they were. Inspired by these motives, they determined, if possible, either to silence the apostles, or to render their efforts abortive. And as they could not accomplish their purposes by fair and honourable measures, they resorted to diabolical stratagem and open violence.

With adversaries equally enraged and hostile, the apostles had to encounter among the priests of heathendom. In each of the surrounding nations, a system of idolatry had

long existed as the established religion of the State. Institutions of crime, from time immemorial, had been consecrated as institutions of religion. Sacrifices were offered to devils, and Jehovah was to those benighted Gentiles an "unknown God." Many of them, it is true, had heard of Him ; but they regarded Him as the God of the Jews only, and as having no jurisdiction over other countries. Judaism they despised as a gross and childish superstition. And while they were immersed in the thickest darkness and defiled by the grossest pollution, they prided themselves in their supposed wisdom and piety. At the head of this systematical and legalized wickedness were the priests, with their numerous subaltern officers. Some of them probably were sincere, and verily thought that they ought to defend, and hand down to posterity, the horrid establishments of which they were the authorized ministers. Others of them, undoubtedly, were profound hypocrites, and secretly laughed at the credulity of the people on whom they sanctimoniously practised their superstitious and corrupt devices. In the maintenance of these abominable institutions, so far as the gratification of the vilest human passions are concerned, the priests were immediately interested. To the importation of foreign idols, or to innovations in their idolatrous ritual, they had no material objection, for they were given to change ; but to the introduction of revealed knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, they were sternly opposed. They had sense enough to know that priestcraft was based on superstition and fraud ; and discernment enough to foresee that the former could not flourish independent of the latter. They consequently dreaded the approach of the apostles, as the signal for the speedy downfall of their juggling order. Exasperated at the prospect of being exposed, discarded,

and condemned as a class of atrocious impostors, they placed themselves in hostile array against the heralds of salvation, and opposed them by every means which they could command.

Another class of violent opponents were the various artisans who derived a maintenance from idolatrous establishments. Builders and decorators of temples, and manufacturers of idols especially, felt it to be for their immediate pecuniary interest to uphold their national superstition. These narrow, selfish views naturally confirmed their prejudice against anything which threatened to bring idolatry into disrepute. Some of them, we presume, artfully concealed their real sentiments, and affected great reverence and zeal for rites and ceremonies, which they despised in their hearts. Whether or not they should defend their ancient religion, was with them, a mere business matter—a question of profit and loss. They were in trade; and idolatry furnished their best customers. The apostles aimed at the extermination of idolatry, and by consequence, at the ruin of every branch of traffic which was upheld by this mystery of iniquity. Hence the avowed object and daring enterprises of the apostles created alarm to the self-interested patrons of superstition.

On some occasions the tradespeople, while they professed a jealous concern for the honour of their deities, candidly acknowledged that their opposition to the apostles were prompted by considerations of gain. When Paul missioned Ephesus, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed, among both Jews and Greeks, that many magicians committed their diabolical books to the flames, and the city was thrown into a state of violent commotion. Demetrius, a leading silversmith, who conducted a flourishing business connected with the worship of the goddess Diana,

assembled the artisans who were engaged in the same occupation, and delivered to them the following oration: "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that there be no gods which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth," (Acts xix. 24—27.) This speech, which was addressed to their superstition and selfishness exclusively, produced a powerful sensation, and a fanatical uproar against the apostle. "And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians," (ver. 28.)

From the facts enumerated, it is evident that the first preachers of the Gospel, in the prosecution of their benevolent labours, had to encounter state persecution, ecclesiastical opposition, commercial hostility, and the brutal violence of lawless mobs. No marvel that St. Paul had occasion to say, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscourings of all things unto this day," (1 Cor. iv. 9—13.) But, notwithstanding

this formidable combination of hostile influences, evangelical truth bore down all opposition, and made astonishing headway. Like a sweeping torrent, deep and broad, it poured along, and strewed the countries through which it flowed with the wreck of ancient idolatry and superstition. Tribes and nations, which had been enveloped in the thickest moral darkness for ages, were suddenly brought under the enlightening and soul-saving influence of the Sun of Righteousness. The rapidity with which the peaceful ambassadors of Christ spread the triumphs of the Gospel, is a theme of intense admiration to every reflecting Christian, and a source of unutterable perplexity to every thoughtful and candid infidel. Within a few days of our Lord's ascension, several thousands were added to the Church at Jerusalem, the very place where, only seven weeks previously, he had been crucified as a malefactor.

Nor was the success of the apostles confined to the day of Pentecost, or to their native country. In the limited period of about thirty years, from the time when the first blast of the Gospel trumpet was heard, there were numerous Christian churches, "not only in Judea and Samaria, but also in Asia, in the isles of the Mediterranean, in Greece, in Italy, and in Africa." The Acts of the Apostles, and the inspired epistles to the various churches which were planted in widely different parts of the civilized world, afford ample evidence of the astonishing achievements of the Gospel in the first half-century of the Christian era. On what principles is this glorious Reformation to be explained? We do not overlook the fact that, while the apostles "went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word, with signs following." Nor do we forget that no kind or amount of influence inferior to that of the Holy Spirit ever did, or

ever will, regenerate the soul of man. But if we attribute the efficient cause of the saving triumphs of the Gospel in the apostolic age to miracles, we err most certainly. Miracles served as signs, or supernatural evidence, to unbelievers, that the apostles were commissioned from heaven to teach men the way of salvation. But in no instance did they convert a soul from sin to holiness, from Satan to God. And if we ascribe the renovation of the heart to the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, which we certainly ought to do, it is, notwithstanding, possible to underrate the efficacy of human agency, in bringing the soul of man under the direct and saving power of God.

In the ordinary dispensations of Providence and grace, the Almighty works by means; and he confers the greatest honour on those who make a wise use of His ordinances, and who are the most concerned for His glory. Flocks, under the care of idle shepherds, cannot prosper. Churches, under the superintendency of uncommissioned or lukewarm pastors will languish and degenerate. Witness the churches of Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, and Laodicea. Witness the degeneracy of the Greek church, and the foul corruptions of the apostate church of Rome. On the other hand, a faithful, earnest ministry will be the honoured instrument of planting and extending evangelical churches. God says, "Them that honour me I will honour." The apostles eminently honoured God; and God eminently honoured the apostles, by making their words like fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. From their hallowed lips—

"The Gospel trumpet's joyful sound,
Poured wide its sacred influence round;
Relenting foes the grace received,
And humble myriads heard and lived."

These illustrious preachers were instant in season, and out of season. "They took advantage of public assemblies in the temple, as well as of all private opportunities, to teach all the truths of their holy religion, and to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, that He was crucified, rose from the dead, and was exalted a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God. How little must these men have regarded their lives, who in the midst of such danger firmly pursued a line of conduct, which to all human views must terminate in ruin!" But they loved their Master. They loved His work. They loved their ungrateful fellowmen. They coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel. In labours they were abundant. In self-denial they were brilliant examples of disinterestedness. In compassion for perishing sinners, in zealous efforts to save them, in long-suffering under provocation, in contentment under hardships and privations, in holiness of life, and in purity of motive, they will stand on the page of inspired history, as models to their successors in the Gospel ministry, till time shall be no more. And although we record our own condemnation, we cannot forbear expressing an opinion, that were we, preachers of the Gospel, to more closely imitate the apostles in our life and labours, we should approach them nearer than we do in our ministerial success.

Bewildered by an erroneous train of thought, I fear we are sometimes apt to regard the apostles as an almost intermediate class of beings, between angels and men. But St. Paul assures us that they were men of like passions with ourselves. By which he unquestionably means that they possessed no faculties or attributes which are not common to human nature. Without controversy they were great men, and richly endued with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Still they were but men ;

and the intellectual and moral materials on which they were called to operate were essentially the same as the materials on which we are called to operate. If we have to grapple with the carnal mind, which is at enmity with God,—so had they. If we have to attempt the emancipation of immortal spirits from the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity,—so had they. If we are necessitated, in dealing with sinners, to instruct, to warn, to threaten, to reason, to expostulate, and persuade,—so were they. We do not say that in every case the personal piety and devotedness of a minister to the glory of God, are to be estimated by the amount of his real or apparent ministerial success. To this notion we cannot subscribe. Neither the ministry of Christ nor that of His apostles was followed by the same glorious results in all circumstances. On some occasions the people listened to the joyful tidings of salvation gladly, and, in great numbers, were converted from the error of their ways. On other occasions they shut their eyes lest they should see, stopped their ears lest they should hear, and hardened their hearts lest they should be converted and God should heal them. But a general rule is not rendered nugatory by casual exceptions. The doctrine for which we plead is that apostolic life and labours will ensure God's blessing and apostolic success.

3. *But the rapid diffusion of Christianity was not confined to apostolic times.* After the removal of the chosen twelve to their eternal reward, their successors nobly led on the spiritual forces of Emanuel from victory to victory, notwithstanding the confederate legions by whom they were fiercely opposed. So triumphant was the progress of the gospel, so great was the number of its avowed disciples, and so powerful was the influence it had acquired,

that in about three hundred years from the death of its Divine Founder, it was publicly recognized as the religion of the vast Roman empire. This mighty revolution in the religious creed and habits of mankind is without a parallel. Had the followers of Christ enjoyed equal privileges with their fellow-subjects, and had they been protected by the Government in the peaceful discharge of their religious duties, their numerical increase and growing importance would not have been so astonishing. But even a novice in ecclesiastical history knows that this was not the case. On the contrary, the disciples of Christ in general, and ministers in particular, were hunted, arrested, falsely accused, worried to death by wild beasts, burned alive, and subjected to the most shameful and horrible tortures which ingenious malice could invent and unrelenting cruelty inflict. In dealing out these unmerited torments to unoffending Christians — emperors, magistrates, jailors, politicians, philosophers, priests, merchants, and rabble, zealously performed their respective parts.

Previous to the conversion of Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperors ruled their Christian subjects with a barbarous sway. Under their iniquitous administration, ten successive persecutions were set on foot against the followers of Christ, and prosecuted with savage ferocity. Rank and learning afforded no protection, but rather attracted the thunder and lightning of the raging elements of tyranny and superstition. The tender sex awakened no feeling of compassion—no sense of justice. Decency was publicly outraged. Virtuous females were condemned to the fiercest corporeal sufferings and to scandalous exposures, which were no less excruciating to their modesty. Only about ten years before Constantine embraced Christianity, Diocletian, his predecessor, visited the Church of

Christ with one of the most terrible State persecutions which is on record. In the year 303 he issued an order to pull down the churches of the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, and to take from them all their civil rights and privileges, and render them incapable of any honours or civil promotion. Incendiary fires, kindled by their enemies, and insurrections raised by tumultuous idolaters, were slanderously attributed to Christians, and dexterously made use of to arm against them the Emperor's fury. Accordingly Diocletian, by a new edict, ordered all the ministers of the Christian Church to be thrown into prison. Nor did his inhuman violence end here; for a third edict was soon issued, by which it was ordered that all sorts of torments should be employed, and the most insupportable punishments invented, to force these venerable captives to renounce their profession, by sacrificing to the heathen gods. But the cruel tyrant was defeated. These heroic champions for Divine truth disdained to accept deliverance on the degrading terms proposed by the Emperor. They fearlessly chose strangling and death rather than life, at the expense of violating their consciences and denying the Lord that bought them. The imperial persecutor no doubt calculated that if the ministers of the gospel could be terrified into idolatry, their flocks could be readily induced to follow their example. An immense number of persons, illustriously distinguished for their piety and learning, became the victims of this cruel stratagem throughout the whole Roman empire, Gaul excepted, which was under the mild and equitable dominion of Constantius Chlorus. Some were punished in so shameful a manner, that the rules of decency oblige us to spread a veil over the revolting spectacle. Some were put to death after having had their

constancy tried by tedious and inexpressible tortures ; others were sent to the mines, to draw out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.

In the 304th year of the Christian era, Diocletian published a fourth edict, at the instigation of Galerius and other inveterate enemies of the Christian name. By this decree the magistrates were ordered and commissioned to force all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and were authorized to employ all sorts of torments, in order to drive them to this act of apostasy.* Such were the fiery ordeals through which Christians were called to pass while idolatrous princes governed the kingdoms of this world. The kingdom of Christ, notwithstanding, gradually acquired strength, and His subjects multiplied from day to day. We scarcely regard it as a digression to remark here, that the splendid triumphs of the gospel over ancient superstition and civil despotism, owed a great deal to the ministers of the gospel—a class of men than whom none have been more misrepresented and abused by avowed infidels and misguided professors of Christianity. And the probability is that millions who are sharing the benefits of evangelical light, and of a liberal constitution, would have now been groaning beneath political oppression, and infatuated by a stupid devotion, had it not been for the noble exertions and the heroic sufferings of the preachers of the gospel in the cause of freedom. If on one hand it is a lamentable fact that professed ambassadors of Christ have shed the blood of the saints like water ; on the other hand, it is a glorious truth that heralds of the gospel have pleaded, and bled, and died in the defence of that pure religion which is so dear to our hearts. It is a gratifying reflection that the

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, IV. Cent.

early and rapid diffusion of the gospel was not accomplished by any means of a questionable character. In the propagation of popery her champions have resorted to crusades, racks, dungeons, flames ; and millions have preferred being dragooned into the Romish Church, to being tormented and murdered by her iron-hearted executioners ; and millions, probably, secretly wish to withdraw from her pale now, but they dare not brave the danger of a revolt. Like the down-trodden slaves of the United States, they would like to run away ; but they dread the consequences, should they be captured, and forcibly carried back into bondage. At the conquests and territorial enlargement of such a church, wherever she can command physical force to support her pretensions, we are not at all surprised.

On the same and kindred principles, which do not apply to Christianity, we can account for the rapid progress and long continuance of Mohammedanism. In propagating his impious frauds, the Arabian impostor had the advantages associated with honourable descent, and an ample fortune acquired by marriage. Proselytes were allured to embrace Islamism, by the artful license it granted to sensual inclinations, in that form which was the most gratifying to Oriental depravity ; and but very limited success crowned the efforts of the false prophet, so long as he confined himself to argument and persuasion. "Three years," says Gibbon, "were silently employed in the conversion of fourteen proselytes." It was not till the impostor resorted to arms, and forced on the surrounding heathen conversion or death, and on professing Christians, the Koran, tribute, or the sword,—that Islamism began to triumph. On the other hand, Christianity was propagated by the force of moral conviction alone, main-

tained its footing, and obtained its conquests in the face of violence and death. Mahomet sought to secure the attachment, and to stimulate the bravery of his followers, by representing the sword as the key to heaven, by holding out the hopes of a voluptuous paradise for those especially who fell fighting under the banner of the Moslem. The holy and benevolent advocates of Christianity employed no such means in the inculcation of their faith. Jesus Christ forbade an appeal to arms, enjoined His disciples to love their enemies, and fired them with zeal for His glory by holding out to them pure and spiritual delights in the kingdom of God. In a word, Mohammedanism is a vile, wicked forgery, and the measures which were devised for its establishment were worthy of its immoral character. Christianity is a system of "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;" and the authorized means for its diffusion are "holy, just, and good." When we represent "Mohammed as a man of a deep and penetrating mind, well acquainted with the superstitious turn of his countrymen; austere, cunning, and hypocritical; a great general and a brutal conqueror, who seemed to sacrifice at no other shrine than that of his lust and ambition, we do him no injustice. The whole of his system bears the most evident proofs of imposition and forgery; nor is there a character to which imposture can lay claim, that does not appear prominently in the Koran, and in every part of the Mohammedan system." (Dr. A. Clarke.) To compare the lascivious and brutal impostor with the spotless and benevolent Redeemer of mankind, and the nefarious frauds of Islamism with the sublime truths of Christianity, would be a species of blasphemy. To use the words of Dr. Paley, "The propagation of Christianity, in the manner and under the circumstances

in which it was propagated, is unique in the species." Admitting, as we do, the Divine origin of our religion, and crowned with unparalleled success as its efforts have been during a succession of many centuries, have we not solid reasons for expecting that a faithful, earnest, and persevering application of this divinely-appointed means of human salvation, will be followed by prosperous results? Let the husbandman plough and sow, then God will bless him with a crop. Let ministers faithfully preach the gospel, then God will magnify His word in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification of believers.

5. Expected success attendant on the faithful publication of the gospel, will not appear unfounded and visionary, if we reflect on what has been witnessed in our own times.—

In Europe and America the last half century has been characterized by unwonted zeal in the propagation of the gospel. The various sections of the Church have roused their slumbering energies, founded institutions, and put in vigorous motion a powerful and efficient machinery for the purpose of overthrowing the kingdom of Satan, and extending the limits of the Saviour's empire among men. One principal branch of this moral machinery is the missionary enterprise. And what have been the results? Not all we have desired, not all which many sanguine Christians anticipated. But no man can deny that the great expenditure of wealth, time, and talent in this benevolent cause has been productive of a vast amount of good.

(1.) It is now about forty-six years since the gospel was first introduced into New Zealand. Immediately before this happy event, what was the condition and manners of the people in possession of those noble islands? Physically the New Zealanders were a fine race of people, and were capable of rapid intellectual advancement, as

the sequel has proved; but morally they were degraded almost to the condition of incarnate demons. Females were held in cruel bondage by the male population. Husbands ruled their wives with a rod of iron. Infanticide prevailed to a fearful extent. Mothers, instead of cherishing their helpless offspring, and protecting them from harm, murdered them in cold blood—sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another. The chiefs governed their respective tribes with despotic sway. Wars between the different tribes were frequent and bloody. Cannibalism was an old-established custom, and a custom which was practised with studied barbarity towards conquered enemies.

(2.) In 1847, I heard Mr. Leigh (one of the first Wesleyan missionaries to New Zealand), state, on a platform at Reading, that he had witnessed from his own premises, a victorious army remain on the battle-field, and feast for two or three weeks together almost entirely on the flesh of their slaughtered foes; and when they struck their tents to march to their own settlements, they murdered the young children of their surviving opponents, and to harrow up the feelings of their parents, they cut off the hands of the children, and suspended them round the necks of their parents, so as to hang on their breasts, and compelled them to carry the mangled bodies of their murdered offspring in baskets on their shoulders. To consummate these cruelties, when the troops required rest and refreshment, they were commanded to halt, when the slaughtered innocents were cooked and served out as a horrid repast. Servants were frequently put to death, that they might follow and attend on their deceased employers in the invisible world.

The first Christian missionary to New Zealand was *Mr. Samuel Marsden*, the Government Chaplain at Paramatta,

New South Wales. He was a native of Horsforth, near Leeds, and was born on the 28th July, 1764. In 1793 he sailed for New South Wales, the remote sphere of his future labours. He is reported by his biographer, Mr. J. B. Marsden, M.A., to have been "decidedly pious," and to have "burned with a desire to make known the Gospel." In January, 1794, Mr. Marsden arrived at Port Jackson. In the discharge of his sacred duties he was opposed by the governor; "but he was a man of resolution, faith, and prayer, and as bold as a lion in the cause of justice, to which he joined humanity full of mercy." In 1808-9 he was on a visit to England, when he attempted to awaken missionary zeal for the conversion of New Zealand to Christ. His benevolent feeling towards that country was greatly intensified by his meeting with a native New Zealander on board the vessel in which he returned to Australia. Mr. Marsden endeavoured at once to gain the affection and confidence of the New Zealander, took him to his house at Paramatta, taught him useful arts, and the great principles of religion, and then sent him home. After several years Mr. Marsden resolved to visit New Zealand. For this purpose he purchased, probably, the first missionary ship ever known. This costly enterprise he undertook at his own charge, constrained by the love of Christ, and an earnest desire to extend His kingdom among the benighted heathen. But in this labour of love he was liberally and deservedly succoured by the Church Missionary Society in London. On the first voyage of his ship he sent out two lay missionaries, commissioned by the said society to pioneer the work of evangelization. They found *Duaterra*, the New Zealand adventurer, who had been treated so generously by Mr. Marsden. He received them kindly, and introduced them to the native

chiefs. With the story of redeeming love, the heralds of Christ carried with them temporal blessings to bestow on the untutored savages. *Duaterra* had, by means of Mr. Marsden, introduced the cultivation of wheat into New Zealand; but he had failed to grind his corn. Great, therefore, was his joy when the missionaries brought him a hand mill with which to grind his corn; and greater still was the astonishment of his countrymen when he baked a cake! Mr. Marsden sailed for New Zealand in November, 1814, with a few savages who had embarked in his ship to see him; a few mechanics, cattle, and horses. He sighted land about the middle of December, and dropped anchor in Wangaroa Bay, a place where a cruel murder had been committed by the cannibals on an English crew. Mr. Marsden found the tribes at war with each other, and his earliest efforts were to reconcile them to each other. *Duaterra* was delighted to see his former friend, with the horses and cows which were presented to him. Till then no quadruped, larger than a pig, and that had been recently imported, had ever been known on the island. *Duaterra* made preparations for the Sabbath, which in 1814 fell on Christmas day. Of his own accord he made a pulpit, a reading-desk, and seats; and on the Sabbath morning he hoisted an English flag over the place, which he filled with native chiefs and their people. Mr. Marsden selected a text which was peculiarly appropriate both for the season of the year and the moral condition of the country. He preached from Luke ii. 10,—“Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy.” *Duaterra* interpreted to the natives; but they replied that they did not understand. He told them that they would understand by-and-bye, and that he would explain. Mr. Marsden won their confidence, secured by a fair purchase a

piece of land for the missionaries, and returned to Sydney in March, 1815, hopeful of a new and glorious era on a land of gross darkness and debasing cannibalism.

For the purpose of propagating the gospel among those benighted and cruel savages, Mr. Marsden undertook *seven* voyages to New Zealand—the last of which was in his seventy-second year. The last days of this apostolic man were like the palm. He was fat and flourishing, and brought forth fruit in old age; and, when on the 12th May, 1838, he was gathered to his fathers, “a great man and a prince fell in Israel.”

The mission has made great progress. After long struggling with the darkness and internecine warfare of the natives, the gospel at length found free course, and the Maoris are now almost wholly a Christian people. Though only in 1842 annexed to the British Crown, and in 1849 made peaceable and obedient, New Zealand has made remarkable advances in civilization and religion. In the eastern district, between 1840 and 1850, communicants increased from 29 to 2,893. In Tauranga, out of a population not exceeding 2,600, there were lately upwards of 800 Maori communicants. The Wesleyan mission has also had great success. The Primitive Methodists, too, with other communities, have laboured amongst them many years with encouragement, and in many a converted Maori has the Redeemer seen of the travail of his soul.

The Church of Rome tried, as usual, to mar this fair work; but the Maoris clung to the Bible, and now rejoice in the pure faith they were at first taught. Some Christian colonies have been established among them—at Canterbury by the Church of England, and at Otago by the Free Church of Scotland. There are now 50,000

Europeans in New Zealand, among whom the ordinances of the gospel are ministered. "The dreaded New Zealander has forsaken his savage haunts and ferocious practices, and may be seen clothed and in his right mind, and sitting to learn at the feet of some teacher of 'the truth as it is in Jesus.'"^{*} That cannibalism prevailed in New Zealand, there can be no doubt. Many have confessed it. Missionaries and others have seen the horrid practice. In war it was the custom of the chiefs to scoop out the eye of the slain and swallow it, and drink a handful of blood from his throat. One of their superstitions was that the hero who thus devoured the eye of his victim, became a star of the firmament. They also believed that the spirit of the slain warrior entered into the soul of the victor, and increased his courage for the conflict. Thus each endeavoured to kill as many as he could. They were in the habit, like the Feejees, of baking and eating the captives taken in war. On the death of any person they slew another—his wife, or some captive, to accompany the dead into the land of spirits. One woman confessed to Mr. Marsden that she had killed and eaten nineteen children!

(3.) Nor was their conduct to strangers less revolting. Of all the numerous isles which stud the bosom of the Pacific Ocean, to the adventurous navigator, none were more terrible than those of New Zealand. In 1771, Marion, the captain of a French vessel went ashore with sixteen men, and were barbarously murdered and eaten, after much friendly intercourse, and professions of kindness on the part of the New Zealanders. In the following year, they murdered eleven Frenchmen out of a party of twelve, who had incautiously confided in their sincerity.

* The substance of this account of Mr. Marsden's mission to New Zealand, is taken from the *British Messenger*, October 1st., 1858.

The only surviving man saw the dead bodies of his comrades cut up, divided among the savage cannibals, and each man carried off his share of the food. In 1773, under Captain Cook, during his second voyage round the world, a party of ten men were cruelly murdered and eaten. In 1809, they treacherously murdered sixty-six persons belonging to the *Boyd*, which lay in the bay of Wangaroa, to land some residents, who had been residing for a time in Australia. And they have recently informed Christian gentlemen, that they formerly thought that every ship, which was driven by adverse winds on their shores, was a present sent them by the gods: they accordingly plundered the vessel as their own lawful property. Such was the darkness and wickedness of New Zealand before she was visited by the messengers of Christ.

(4.) But what is the national condition and character of her people now? What advantages have they derived from the preaching of Christ crucified. Much every way. Intelligent, observing gentlemen, who have long resided among them since the colonization of those islands, have borne the most honourable and gratifying testimony to the glorious effects which have been produced by the evangelical labours of the missionaries. The most unnatural and bloody customs of the natives are almost, if not entirely, extirpated. Many of them have made astonishing proficiency in useful learning, and occupy respectable positions in society. Not a few are in fellowship with Christian churches, some of whom, we have good reason to believe, have experienced the saving power of the Gospel. Only a few years ago, there was a misunderstanding between the Government and some of the native chiefs. Two hostile troops, British and native, met and assumed a threatening attitude. At that critical moment

a native chief advanced with a New Testament in his hand, and addressed a British officer in the following terms:—"Don't fight, don't fight; don't make these people bad, whom the missionaries have made good." In the *Church Missionary Record* a case is recorded which strikingly illustrates the power of a preached Gospel in subduing the fiercest passions, and in imbuing the soul with a peaceful and conciliatory disposition. "A few days ago," says this document, "one of the carpenters engaged to build the new church, employed a native to dig his garden; when he had done his work he went into the carpenter's shop, to talk with him about payment. The other carpenter, a cross, surly-tempered man, said to the native, 'Get you out of the shop, we want none of you fellows here!' The native replied, 'Don't be angry, I am come to talk with Benjamin.' The fellow said, 'I shall be angry;' and, after a few words, began to ill use the native in a most barbarous manner, kicking him in the side, because he refused to get up. The native made no resistance till the man left off; when he jumped up, took the fellow by the throat, held him with one hand as a man would a child, and drew out a plane-iron tied on the top of a stick, so as to form a little adze. 'Now,' said the native, while he held the instrument over his head, 'you see your life is in my hand. You owe your life to the preaching of the Gospel; you see my arm is quite strong enough to kill you, and my arm is willing, but my heart is not, because I have heard the missionaries preach the Gospel. If my heart were as dark as it was before I heard them preach, I should strike off your head.' He forbore to return the blows, but made the offender pay a blanket for the insult."—*An Earnest Address to New Zealand Colonists, by the Rev. Montague Hawtrey, p. 103.*

During the present (October, 1860,) war unhappily raging in the colony between the natives and her Majesty's Government, at a conference of chiefs, convened at Kohimarama, by Governor Brown, Chief Rihari said, "Now let me say a word about the *maori* (the native). In former times he was poor; since the arrival of the *pakeha* (white people) he has become rich. The Gospel, too, has reached this island. My god in the old time was Onenuku. I have a very different God now. I am grateful to the *pakeha* for the following benefits, namely, Christianity, the laws, and good will." In a letter, dated New Zealand, January 2nd, 1855, from my esteemed friend and formerly colleague in the ministry, Mr. Thomas Cheeseman, who is now located in that colony, he says:—"The Aboriginal population are an astonishing race. Who would have thought, sixteen years ago, that New Zealand, the terror of navigators, the scene of war, rapine, and cannibalism, might now be traversed everywhere in fearless security by a solitary, unarmed traveller? It might have tasked the faith of the most sanguine, but such is actually the case. They are humanized and civilized. And under the teaching of the Christian missionary numbers have embraced religion. They are valuable labourers. I have had seven of them mowing grass on my farm, and am able to testify that, in every respect, they equalled the white man. Before retiring to rest in the evening, one read a chapter in the New Testament, after which all knelt before the Almighty, and engaged in fervent prayer." To this statement the present unsettled state of the colony is no contradiction. Our desolating wars in India and China afford no proof that England is yet a barbarous and an idolatrous nation. And this remark applies to the civilized part of the native population of New Zealand.

(5.) In what state did John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, and his companions find the Polynesian islands thirty-six years ago? They were hateful, and hating one another. They were frequently engaged in exterminating wars. Infanticide in a horrible variety of forms prevailed to an almost incredible extent. Although blessed with a favourable climate, a fertile soil, beautiful and magnificent scenery, and advantageously situated for commerce, they were deeply degraded, enveloped in a black cloud of superstition, and fearfully given to idolatry. So firmly established were the strongholds of ignorance, crime, and misery, that for a long time they seemed invulnerable! Some of the missionaries lost their lives. To avoid the like fate others fled to New South Wales. A few never abandoned their posts, but—

“Nobly for their Master stood,
Dauntless champions for their God.”

At Tahiti the missionaries appeared to be “labouring in vain, and spending their strength for nought.” “For sixteen years,” says Mr. Williams, “notwithstanding the untiring zeal, the incessant journeyings, the faithful exhortations of these devoted men, no spirit of interest or inquiry appeared; no solitary instance of conversion took place; the wars of the natives continued frequent and desolating, and their idolatries abominable and cruel. The heavens above seemed to be as brass, and the earth as iron.” Such was the vile and wretched condition of the people who inhabited the enchanting islands of the South Sea. But the Lord, by His preached word, hath done great things for them, whereof we are glad. No words can express the depth, and the extent, and the glory of that work of grace which has been accomplished among

them by missionary agency. In literature, in jurisprudence, in religion, they are amazingly exalted above their immediate ancestors. And the intellectual, spiritual, and permanent characteristics of this great modern reformation, demonstrate it to be the work of God. When benighted pagans pass over from heathen idolatry to Popery, the transition is not difficult, and the change not very striking. But when they renounce the absurdities of a time-honoured superstition, and embrace the pure and simple religion of the New Testament, the change is radical and saving.

It is a circumstance fraught with encouragement to those ministers who are "sowing in tears" without witnessing any immediate fruit of their labours, that while the South Sea islanders appeared to make light of the message of mercy, and to be unimpressed by the heavenly truths to which they listened from year to year, the Sun of Righteousness was gradually illuminating their minds and softening their hearts. In some instances revivals of religion broke out so abruptly and spread so rapidly, that "the missionaries had little else to do but to help forward the work which God had so unexpectedly and wonderfully commenced." By the united labours of the London and Wesleyan Missionary Societies, and the American Board of Missions, about half-a-million of the population, inhabiting various groups of islands in the South Sea, have been brought out of gross darkness into marvellous light through the preaching of the gospel. Nor can we fairly be charged with fanaticism, if we confidently hope that many thousands of this vast number have been translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The uncompromising resistance which they have offered to the recent aggressions of popery, afford no con-

temptible evidence, that they are firmly rooted and grounded in the enlightened principles in which they have been carefully instructed by Protestant ministers of the gospel.

6. *What was the social and spiritual condition of the West Indies forty years ago?* The abominable institution of slavery held many hundred thousands of our fellow subjects in bondage in those colonies. By a long course of cruel oppression, the poor negroes were reduced to the condition of cattle, as nearly as it was possible for human beings to be crushed down to such a condition. They had souls, of course, as well as the fair and olive complexioned lords who tyrannized over them; but their souls were uncared for. They had minds; but they were as uncultivated as the unbroken soil. They were treated, not like men, but as beasts of burden and drudgery. Many of them were allowed to live in promiscuous concubinage, and their offspring were claimed by their masters, as their legitimate property. They lived in miserable huts or sheds, and their food and clothing were of the meanest kind. They were compelled to work in the fields in gangs beneath a burning sky, under the superintendency of drivers, who were armed with the cart whip. Most of them, it is true, had little garden plots assigned to them, on which they raised vegetables which constituted a principal part of their food; but these garden patches they were condemned to cultivate after their hard day's work was performed, or on the holy Sabbath. Such, we are assured by credible eye witnesses, was the general condition of field negroes in Jamaica only thirty or forty years ago. That of the domestic negroes was somewhat better; but no privilege of this kind was secured to them by any legal guarantee. A few of the slaves who had

happily fallen into the hands of more humane masters, we cheerfully admit, were more favourably circumstanced. But of the great mass it may be truly said, that their righteous claims, as fellow men, were scandalously disregarded.

It seems almost impossible to raise a people, so shockingly degraded, to a position of social enjoyments, mutual rights, and religious intelligence. But "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" has signally triumphed over West Indian ignorance and crime. This statement is confirmed by the public testimony of a missionary belonging to the London Missionary Society, the Rev. R. Jones, who resided in Chapeltown, in the heart of Jamaica, eleven years, and who, in the month of September, 1853, is reported to have addressed a meeting in Leeds to the following effect:—"The coloured population (of Jamaica) have all embraced the Christian religion, which they hold intelligently, and with a depth of interest and feeling much surpassing what is known in England. They have their Bibles and one or two other religious books, and most of them can read. They attend the places of worship in a far larger proportion than the people of this country, and observe the Lord's day much more religiously. The number of them joined in the fellowship of Christian churches and regularly communicating is about seven times as great, in proportion to their number, as is found among the inhabitants of London. Each man has his own wife, and supports his own family: immorality is almost unknown. The coloured men act as deacons of churches, and superintendents of Sunday-schools. The children receive almost universally a day-school education, for which the parents pay 3d. a-week for each child. Christian villages have been formed, in which each man has about

an acre of land, with a good house in the midst, and the ground well cultivated around. The men, women, and children are dressed as well as the middle classes in England. Most of the men own a horse. They live in comfort. There are very few poor, and those are supported by their relatives and neighbours. Crime is so rare that the prisons are nearly empty, and lately a prison which served for three parishes, nearly as large as three English counties, was shut up, owing to there being only three or four prisoners, who were transferred to Kingstone gaol. The blacks do not possess much general knowledge, but they are close students of the Bible, and they generally seek a copy with marginal references. Their liberality to religious objects is great; the mission stations, with their chapels and schools, are very nearly self-supporting. The salaries of the missionaries and schoolmasters are raised by the congregations and scholars, and all the work that is needed is cheerfully done. The kindness of the people to strangers is very striking; they would go a great distance to show a traveller his way. Their readiness to perform field labour is proved by the large exports of sugar from the island. But many of them are tradesmen, handicraftsmen, merchants, &c. A great many are freeholders, having votes for members of the House of Assembly; and there are eleven or twelve black members in the house. They are also magistrates and vestrymen, and they fill almost every public office. Of course they possess all the rights and privileges of free men."

It will be remembered that our colonial slavery was abolished in 1838. But if it should be thought that this admirable and beautiful state of society is the mere consequence of emancipation, a single fact will suffice to correct the error: Mr. Jones has been frequently told by the

blacks, that on emancipation their disposition was to betake themselves in a body to the mountains, and that nothing prevented them but attachment to the missionaries.

Thus, not only was the abolition of slavery mainly brought about by the missionaries, but, when it took place, their influence alone prevented a complete disorganization of society. Some may possibly conjecture that all this work of civilization and evangelization may have been powerfully aided by the island Government and votes of public money. But so far from it, the established clergy of the island have no hold whatever on the blacks, none of whom attend their ministry. The island curates receive from £300 to £400 a year, and the rectors, from £600 to £800; but many of the state built churches have a congregation not exceeding ten or twelve persons, while the congregations of the missionaries are crowded. It is "the gospel of Christ," untrammelled by state alliance, which is emphatically "the power of God unto salvation." Such are the facts relative to the great moral and social regeneration of the coloured population of Jamaica; and we appeal to the judgment of every reader, if they do not prove the inestimable value and mighty efficacy of Christian missions. Can anything like this sudden elevation of the heathen slave into the Christian freeman be found in the history of any age of the world, apart from Christian agency? We believe not. And let it be yet further observed that the effect is traced at every step to the *voluntary* zeal and self-devotion of religious men. Government did nothing towards it, beyond giving freedom and protection, to which it was urged by the same Christian agency: all the work of raising the despised *chattel* into the man and the Christian, has been "the work of faith and labour

of love.”* It may be proper to notice, that in bringing about this remarkable and happy change, ministers of the gospel, in connection with the Wesleyan and Baptist denominations, have had an honourable share.

7. *If we next turn our attention to Africa, we shall find that the power of the gospel has been displayed in a manner no less remarkable among several of the nations and tribes who inhabit that benighted quarter of the globe.* In the dark places of that vast continent, the habitations of men are full of cruelty. Helpless children are thrown by their unnatural parents to wild beasts, parents are exposed and abandoned in old age by their unfeeling children, wives are treated barbarously by their husbands, infants are buried alive with their deceased mothers. In some states men-stealing and slavery are systematically carried on by the Government. “In Dahomy, one of the most important kingdoms of Western Africa, with a population of 200,000 souls, nine-tenths are slaves. The slave trade constitutes the principal source of the sovereign’s revenue. A slave hunt is proclaimed every year. And no language can depict the horrors which it involves. Those persons only, who are captured by these royal hunting parties, are reserved, who are fit for the Dahomy army, or who can be sold to the slave-merchant. Brazil, in South America, and Cuba, in the West Indies, are customers for this strange commodity. The Dahomans support a large female army, remarkable for its ferocity. Their religion is a strange compound of degrading and brutalizing superstition. Their priests and priestesses are called fetish men and fetish women, and possess great power, which they abuse to the oppression of the people. The Fetish of Abomey is the leopard, that of Whyda, the snake. Human

* *Leeds Mercury*, October 1st., 1853.

sacrifices are very frequent, and on some occasions vast numbers are destroyed at a time."* The grovelling superstition and shocking cruelty of these people, are but a specimen of kindred abominations, equally revolting, which obtain among several other African communities. In this degraded and repulsive section of the heathen world, missionaries belonging to no fewer than twelve or fourteen different religious societies have been recently toiling. Nor have they laboured in vain. Darkness has vanished before light. Error has fallen before truth. Treachery and barbarity have been succeeded by friendship and humanity. And the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart has been offered to the living God where human victims were once sacrificed to devils. Some of the most astonishing triumphs of the gospel ever witnessed, have been achieved by the preaching of the cross in sin-disfigured Africa. Of this class there are some extraordinary instances in the *Missionary Labours and Scenes* of Robert Moffat.

For example, take the following, which we feel confident will interest our readers. Africaner, a distinguished chief, while in a state of heathenism, was the terror of the Cape Colony. In savage warfare he was a renowned hero—the pride of his friends, and the terror of his enemies. But this lion-like savage was induced, by the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, to lay down his arms at the feet of the Saviour, and to enter the kingdom of God as a little child. A short time after Africaner's conversion, Mr. Moffat was about to undertake a journey to Cape Town, whither he invited the illustrious chief to accompany him. "The good man looked at me," says Mr. Moffat, "again

* "Two Missions to the King of Dahomy, and Residence at his Capital, in the years 1849-50," by Frederick E. Forbes, Commander R.N., &c.

and again, gravely asking whether I were in earnest, and seemed fain to ask if I were in my senses too; adding with great fervour, 'I had thought you loved me, and do you advise me to go to the Government to be hung up as a spectacle of public justice?' and putting his hand to his head, he asked, 'Do you not know that I am an outlaw, and that one thousand rix-dollars have been offered for this poor head?' These difficulties I endeavoured to remove, by assuring him that the results would be most satisfactory to himself, as well as to the governor of the Cape. Here Africaner exhibited his lively faith in the gracious promises of God, by replying, 'I shall deliberate, and roll my way upon the Lord; I know he will not leave me.' Some of these worthy people (the Dutch farmers), on the borders of the Colony, congratulated me on returning alive, having often heard, as they said, that I had been long since murdered by Africaner. Much wonder was expressed at my narrow escape from such a monster of cruelty, the report having been spread that Mr. Ebner had but just escaped with the skin of his teeth. While some would scarcely credit my identity, my testimony as to the entire reformation of Africaner's character and his conversion, was discarded as the effusions of a frenzied brain. As Africaner travelled *incog.*, it sometimes afforded no little entertainment to him and the Namaquas to hear a farmer denounce this supposed irreclaimable savage. At one farm a novel scene exhibited the state of feeling respecting Africaner and Mr. Moffat, and likewise displayed the power of Divine grace under peculiar circumstances. The farmer referred to was a good man in the best sense of the word; and both he and his wife had shown Mr. Moffat great kindness on his way to Namaqua-land. On approaching the house, which was on an eminence, Mr. M. says, 'I directed my

men to take the waggon to the valley below, while I walked toward the house. The farmer seeing a stranger, came slowly down the descent to meet me. I addressed him in the usual way, and, when within a few yards, stretching out my hand, expressed my pleasure at seeing him again. He put his hand behind him, and asked me, rather wildly, who I was. I replied that I was Moffat, expressing my wonder that he should have forgotten me. 'Moffat!' he rejoined, in a faltering voice, 'it is your *ghost*!' and moved some steps backwards. 'I am no ghost.' 'Don't come near me,' he exclaimed, 'you have been long murdered by Africaner.' 'But I am no ghost,' I said, feeling my hands, as if to convince him and myself, too, of my materiality; but his alarm only increased. 'Everybody says you were murdered; and a man told me he had seen your bones;' and he continued to gaze at me to the no small astonishment of the good wife and children, who were standing at the door, as also to that of my people, who were looking on from the waggon below. At length he extended his trembling hand, saying, 'When did you rise from the dead?' As he feared my presence would alarm his wife, we bent our steps towards the waggon, and Africaner was the subject of our conversation. I gave him in a few words my views of his present character, saying, 'He is now a truly good man.' To which he replied, 'I can believe almost anything you say, but that I cannot credit. There are seven wonders in the world; that would be the eighth.' I appealed to the displays of Divine grace in a Paul, a Manasseh, and referred to his own experience. He replied, 'These were another description of men; but that Africaner was one of the accursed sons of Ham, enumerating some of the atrocities of which he had been guilty. By this time we were standing with

Africaner at our feet, on whose countenance sat a smile, well knowing the prejudices of some of the farmers. The farmer closed the conversation by saying with much earnestness, 'Well, if what you assert be true respecting that man, I have only one wish, and that is, to see him before I die; and when you return, as sure as the sun is over our heads, I will go with you to see him, though he killed my own uncle!' I was not before aware of this fact, and now felt some hesitation whether to discover to him the object of his wonder; but knowing the sincerity of the farmer, and the goodness of his disposition, I said, 'This, then, is Africaner!' He started back, looking intensely at the man, as if he had just dropped from the clouds. 'Are you Africaner?' he exclaimed. Africaner arose, doffed his old hat, and making a polite bow, answered, 'I am.' The farmer seemed thunderstruck; but when by a few questions, he had assured himself of the fact that the former bugbear of the border stood before him, now meek and lamb-like in his whole deportment, he lifted up his eyes, and exclaimed, 'O God, what a miracle of thy power! what cannot thy grace accomplish!'"* At conversions like this we wonder and adore. By the peaceful weapons of the gospel, savage warriors are completely subdued, and made the humble followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. "This is the Lord's doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

8. *The recent preaching of the Gospel has not been less effectual in the island of Madagascar.*—A mission to this island was commenced by the London Missionary Society in 1818. Light and truth battled successfully with darkness and error. Many of the natives embraced the

* Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa. By Robert Moffat.

Gospel. Nor were they ashamed of Christ before men, but boldly confessed Him to the hazard of their lives. A state persecution broke out in 1837, which brought some of these new, but brave disciples of Jesus to martyrdom. Against the savage cruelties which they were called to endure, they bore up with a courage not inferior to that which characterized the primitive believers. In defiance of the barbarities of a fierce and despotic government, Christianity survived the shock, and struck its roots deep in the national mind. The stately trees of righteousness, and the tender scions which shot up around them, might be seen, and cut down by the axe of persecution; but the living fibres which spread vigorously beneath the surface of the soil, were unobserved by the persecutor's inquisitorial eye, and supplied the rudiments of a still wider and more luxuriant growth. A war of intentional *extermination* has often proved a war of *propagation*. Pharaoh ruled the Hebrews in the house of bondage with an iron rod; but the more he oppressed them, the more they multiplied and grew. As individuals, vast numbers of them were gradually destroyed by excessive toil, and not a few of them were murdered outright. But as a community, like the key-stone of an arch, they successfully resisted the tremendous pressure which was brought to bear on them. In the iron furnace, and beneath the lash of cruel task-masters, they acquired numerical strength and physical energy from day to day. How was this? God was their protector. Consequently, "there was no enchantment against Jacob, neither was their divination against Israel." In the apostolic age the disciples were scattered abroad everywhere by the flames of persecution. What was the result? The dispersed refugees scattered the living seed of the Gospel among the different tribes and nations whither they

fled for their lives. Thus the Supreme Ruler of the universe, "who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, makes the wrath of man to praise him."

So we trust it will be in Madagascar. After the storm of persecution in 1837 had spent its fury, it appears the infant church had comparative rest for a short season. But in 1845, another severe persecution broke out about five months after the conversion of Rakotondradama, a prince of only seventeen years of age. Twenty-one Christians were seized and condemned to death. The prince pleaded for their lives with his savage mother the queen. She consented to spare the lives of the Christians, if they would drink a disagreeable draught, to discover whether or not they were guilty of any crime against her. One of them died; the rest were sold for slaves. Since then many soldiers have been converted. And, as is usual in similar cases, the patient suffering and constancy of the disciples of Christ, awakened reflection and sympathy, and frustrated the designs of despotic intolerance. In 1850, a third state persecution raged against the Christians with great violence. About one thousand two hundred of them were summoned to the capital to answer to the charge of worshipping the only true and living God. Three persons, who were most distinguished for their rank and devotedness, were sentenced to be burned alive. At the fires of martyrdom, their tortures exceeded the power of description. While they were suffering at the stake the rains fell in torrents, which extinguished the flames. Ten others were precipitated headlong from a rocky eminence near the city, and dashed to pieces. Some of those who were thrown from the rocks were first suspended over the frightful precipice with ropes, and pardon was offered them on condition they would renounce Christianity, and return

to idolatry ; but they disdained the offer, and, in the true spirit of martyrs, preferred an honourable death to a shameful reprieve.

As it was in the purest ages of the church, delicate and modest females braved the most terrible threats of their tormentors, and counted not their lives dear to themselves so that they might finish their course with joy. Rasalama, or as her name imports, "Peace," believed the joyful tidings of the Gospel, and professed herself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The queen sent officers to seize her. When they took hold on her, she said, "I am not afraid, but rather rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer affliction for believing in Jesus : I have hope of the life in heaven." They put her in heavy irons and beat her, but she continued to sing hymns. Next, they bound her with rings and bars in a manner which tortured her body, by forcing her head and feet together. Still she would not deny her Saviour. They then led her to the place of execution. As she went to the fatal spot, she prayed and sang praises, and when she passed the chapel where the missionaries used to preach, she said to the soldiers, "There I heard the words of the Saviour." When she arrived on the spot where she was to be put to death she knelt down and prayed. As she was committing her spirit into the hands of her Redeemer, three or four ruffians rushed on her with spears, and thrust them through her back into her heart. Her body was left to be devoured by wild dogs. But the death of Rasalama and her companions in martyrdom could not terrify the surviving church into apostasy. A young man, named Rafaralahy, had seen Rasalama die. He was one of those who "loved Jehovah Jesus, who mind a Sabbath, make prayers, and keep the book," or the Bible, as the Chris-

tians were described by the queen. When the disciples were hunted by their enemies, Rafaralahy removed to a private spot, and built a high wall round the house, and a gate, that no one might get in and seize them by surprise. Here they used to meet for prayer, and to encourage one another, as their teachers were driven away from them. An unprincipled man having discovered their concealment, for the sake of a reward turned informer, and Rafaralahy was seized and put in irons. His persecutors endeavoured to force him to give the names of those who assembled in his house for divine worship, but he steadfastly refused, and said, "Here am I; let the queen do what she pleases with me; I will not accuse my friends!" As he was hurried to the place of execution, he spoke of Jesus Christ to the soldiers, and told them how happy he felt at the thought of soon seeing Him who had loved and died a painful death to effect his salvation. He begged for a few moments to commit his soul to the Saviour; after which he prayed for his brethren and unhappy country. Having concluded his prayer, he arose from his knees, and the executioners were about to throw him down on the ground, but he informed them there was no need for that, as he was ready to die; and calmly laying himself down, he was put to death by spears thrust through his body.* Such is the mighty energy of the Gospel, and such is the moral heroism of modern Christians in seasons of fiery trial.

Viewed from a missionary point of observation, the aspect of affairs in Madagascar is more favourable than it was some time ago. Recent intelligence stated there was a great numerical increase of Christians in Madagascar; that they had not fewer than seven houses in the capital

* "Martyrs of Madagascar." Tract. Religious Tract Society, &c.

where they met during the night for worship, for administering baptism, and for celebrating the Lord's Supper; and it appears they had ready access to the prince, at his own house, within the precincts of the palace. Letters also from Prince Ramonga, a nephew of the queen, and cousin of the prince, requested that Bibles, Testaments, and smaller books, might be sent to him at the capital, and named the agent at Tamatave, to whose care they might be addressed.* These are favourable indications; and we trust they will prove to be the welcome harbingers of religious liberty and prosperity. The aggressive and passive principles of the gospel in this infant Church have passed through a severe ordeal. May the fruits thereof be glorious and lasting.

* Primitive Methodist Magazine, p. 695, 1853.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PRESENT CENTURY THE POTENCY OF A PREACHED GOSPEL, IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MOST HOSTILE ELEMENTS, AND ITS ADMIRABLE ADAPTATION TO THE SPIRITUAL WANTS OF MANKIND, HAVE BEEN STRIKINGLY DISPLAYED IN THE ANCIENT DOMINIONS OF DARKNESS AND CRUELTY IN INDIA.

1. India, an ancient stronghold of idolatry. 2. The doctrine of Caste. 3. The cruelty of Indian superstition. 4. Roman Catholic missionaries, and their crooked policy. 5. The deplorable condition of India when it was first visited by Protestant Missionaries, about 1700. 6. A religious awakening among the Hindoos, and subsequent victories of the cross. 7. Interesting Statistics of Christianity. 8. Comparative small success of the Gospel in India, and why. (1) The opposition of the East India Company's Government to Christian Missions. (2) The patronage which the said Government has lavished on idolatry! (3) The Antichristian cause of the Indian Government ably and zealously pleaded in the British Parliament. 9. A brighter Sun now shines on the long-benighted realms of India.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."—Isa. ix. 2.

1. For thousands of years, INDIA has been one of the strongest forts of idolatry. In this vast benighted region, teeming with two hundred and forty millions of human beings, superstition has revelled with almost undisturbed sway, and the most cruel and loathsome forms of idolatry have been invented or imported, consolidated, and rendered sacred by immemorial usage. "While the Hindoos verbally admit the Divine unity, they speak of three hundred and thirty millions of gods. Having no knowledge of the government of Jehovah,

they suppose the world to be placed under the management of beings who are ignorant, capricious, and wicked; that the three principal deities—the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer, having no love of righteousness, or settled rules of administration, are often quarrelling and subverting one another's arrangements; and thus they know not whom to obey, or in whom to confide. In this awful manner have they changed the truth of God into a lie.' ”

—*Missionary Records*, India.

2. *Another formidable barrier against the entrance of evangelical truth into India, is the doctrine of caste.* Originally, the Hindoos were divided into four castes or tribes; the Brahmin, the Ketra, the Bice, and the Soodra; each of which is again subdivided into a number of different branches. By a most unjust and pernicious law, they are forbidden to quit their own caste, or to admit into it persons of another caste. The station of every individual is, consequently, unalterably fixed. Moreover, the members of each tribe must adhere invariably to the profession of their ancestors, and continue from generation to generation, to pursue one uniform walk of life. In consequence of these unnatural and compulsory distinctions, all motives to exertion, inquiry, or improvement, are completely extinguished; for the most honourable actions, beneficial discoveries, or virtuous conduct, secures no respect or advantage to a person of inferior caste. On the other hand, those of high caste suffer no loss of reputation by being indolent, ignorant, or vicious. Consequently they display a stupid contentment with their state, a total want of curiosity, and not a thought seems ordinarily to arise as to the enlargement of their understandings, or the amelioration of their hearts. They consider the different castes to be distinct species of animals; and hence conclude

that it is as possible for them to become some other kind of animals, as it is for them to become Christians ; and that the different forms of worship and habits of life, observed by particular castes, are no less necessary to them than eating grass is to an ox, or flesh to a tiger. But, notwithstanding the vital importance of caste, in their estimation, it may be lost by the most trifling incident, as eating, drinking, or smoking with a person of a different tribe or nation. Yet the loss of caste is attended with the most dreadful consequences, so far as this life is concerned. No one will eat, drink, or smoke with such a person ; no one will marry into his family ; his wife, his children, his friends disown him, and are often material sufferers by what he has done, sometimes even losing caste themselves in consequence of it ; and thus he ruins them as well as himself. Dr. Carey, the distinguished Baptist missionary, knew a man whose caste was gone, through a woman in the family being obliged to live with a Mussulman ; and although he offered a lac of rupees, or about ten thousand pounds sterling, to have it restored, the offer was of no avail ! Besides, such is the influence of example, that the Mussulmen are as attentive to their imaginary caste, as the Hindoos are to theirs ; and thus the same obstacle operates with similar force on them. Mr. Hardy, Wesleyan missionary from India, is reported to have stated on a platform at Leeds, in October, 1853, that he knew himself there were 629 distinct castes in that section of the world.

3. *Another serious impediment to the propagation of the gospel in India is the cruelty of its superstition.*—In the present century, and within the confines of British rule, helpless infants have been thrown by their unnatural mothers into the river to be devoured by sharks and

alligators; men have prostrated themselves beneath the wheels of Juggernaut's ponderous car; as many as sixteen women, accompanied by as many priests, have been plunged by these vile officials into the water at once, where the Ganges and the Jumna, two sacred rivers, unite their purifying streams; and newly-made widows have been consigned, in vast numbers, to the burning flames which consumed the bodies of their deceased husbands. The number of women who were burned alive on the funeral pile of their husbands, within thirty miles round Calcutta, from the 5th of April to the 15th of October, 1804, was *one hundred and fifteen*. By an (official) account taken in 1803, the number of woman sacrificed during that year, within the aforesaid circuit, was *two hundred and seventy-five*. In the foregoing report of six months in 1804, no account was taken of the burning of widows in a district to the west of Calcutta, nor farther than twenty miles in some other directions; so that the entire number of burnings within this circle was doubtless considerably larger than is here stated. But how, it may be enquired, were these dreadful statistics collected, and on what authority were they reported to the government? Ten persons of Hindoo caste were deputed for this express purpose under the superintendency of the professor of the Sanscrit and Bengalee languages in the college of Fort William. They were stationed at different places during the whole period of six months. They gave in their accounts monthly, specifying the particulars of each immolation, so that every individual case was subject to investigation immediately after its occurrence.* These appalling records furnish but a very imperfect idea of the extent to which the horrible custom of sutteeism or widow-burning prevailed in India,

* "Christian Researches in India," by Dr. Buchanan.

before it was blessed with the light of the gospel by Protestant missionaries.

4. *The Roman Catholics* had been labouring in India, in their crooked way, *three hundred years*, and had hundreds of priests there; but they had effected, comparatively little spiritual good. At this we are not at all surprised. The corruption of their theology, the establishment of the inquisition at Goa, their boundless ambition, their grafting a spurious Christianity on the living stock of idolatry, operated as a deadly poison mixed up with wholesome food. The little truth which the Romish missionaries taught was buried beneath the superincumbent load of heathen error. And the feeble rays of light which emanated from the Babylonian teachers, were scarcely perceptible amid the thick darkness in which the benighted people were enveloped. In too many instances, professed conversions to the faith of the gospel, were mere transitions from one system of idolatry to another. The objects of devotion were new, but the spirit of devotion was unchanged. The sacred trumpery of the Brahmins was renounced for the imported merchandise of Rome. One of the greatest crimes with which the Romish priests are chargeable, is, they withheld, as they are wont to do, "the key of knowledge" from the people. We have the authority of Mr. Hardy, before referred to, for stating that although they had occupied India three centuries, "they had never translated a single leaf of the Scriptures into any one of the thirty-five dialects of the country!" This fact alone brands the character of those missionaries with eternal infamy.

5. Such was the state of India when she was first visited by Protestant missionaries. Apparently impervious to the pure light of Divine truth, and proof against all

evangelical operations, it formed one of the most impregnable strongholds of the devil. There Satan's throne was, and his vassals, by tens of millions, were held in cruel, but willing bondage. How were the eyes of their understanding to be enlightened, their galling fetters to be broken, and their unregenerated souls introduced into the glorious liberty of the gospel? With man the transformation was impossible. But all things are possible to God, and all things are possible to him that believeth; and in the dark places of India, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In habitations where cruelty recently sat enthroned, peace on earth, good will to men, and glory to God in the highest, now reign triumphant. In thousands of instances, the black demon of hoary superstition has fallen by the two-edged sword of Divine truth. The first Protestant mission commenced about 1700, and it has been computed that, from the foundation of the mission to 1805, "no fewer than eighty thousand natives, of all the different castes, had been converted to the faith of Christ." In 1799 several missionaries arrived, but as they were not allowed to settle on the British territory, it was determined that they should reside at Serampore, the Danish governor having received Mr. Carey in a very friendly manner. During several years the Hindoos yielded little or no fruit, and the missionaries were greatly discouraged. But they had not laboured in vain. The previous seed which they had sown in tears, was secretly germinating in the hearts of some of their hearers. During this season of special anxiety, these men of God found consolation in prayer, and a weekly meeting for this exercise was appointed. About this time, too, they were particularly led to discourse much on the sufferings and death of Christ.

6. These special services were very soon followed by special results. Mr. Thomas, a missionary, was called to attend one of his hearers, whose name was Kristno, who had dislocated one of his arms. Mr. Thomas availed himself of this favourable opportunity of speaking freely with the sufferer on salvation by the blood of the cross, and Kristno wept and sobbed aloud. Gokool, another Hindoo, was present, and paid great attention to all that was said. A few days afterwards Kristno was anxious to go to the Mission-house for instruction; for he declared that Mr. Thomas had not only cured his arm, but also told him how he might escape the wrath to come. He and Gokool accordingly went together to hear the word of God; and although the wife and family of the latter deserted him for his supposed attachment to the gospel, those of the former seemed like-minded with himself, and, having received further instruction, they avowed their intention to cast in their lot with the people of God. Mr. Ward, another missionary, in his journal says, December 12th, 1800, "This day Gokool and Kristno came to eat tiffin (what in England is called luncheon) with us, and thus publicly threw away their caste. All our servants were astonished; so many had said that nobody would ever mind Christ, or lose caste. . . . Thus the door of faith is open to the Gentiles. Who shall shut it? The chain of caste is broken. Who shall mend it? In the evening of the same day, both of them, with Kristno's wife and her sister, presented themselves before the church, and solemnly professed their faith in Christ, and obedience to His commands." On witnessing these proofs of the power and success of the gospel, Mr. Thomas was almost overcome with joy; and at the close of the meeting all the missionaries, with their relations and friends, stood

up and sang the hymn—

“ Salvation, O the joyful sound !
Throughout the world proclaim,” &c.*

Kristno subsequently became very serviceable to the missionaries, by composing hymns and tracts in the vernacular language of the natives.

Converts to Christ in India have been won from high Brahminical ranks. Jugunat'ha Mookhoojya was one of this class. This man was of a rich family, and well versed both in the Orissa and Bengalee languages, and he was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of the gospel, that he renounced his caste, threw away his *poita*, or sacred thread, and ate publicly with Mr. Peter, the missionary, to whom he expressed his earnest desire for baptism. One evening, while the missionary was reading and explaining to him part of the Bengalee Testament, he expressed his joy that Christ was able to dispossess Satan even of his strongholds, and remarked, “ The debtas are evil spirits, and the followers of Jesus have power from Him to overcome the devil and all his temptations. I am growing fearless of the power of debtas, and all persecutors. Should the people of my caste kill me, I will not fear, since I hope that heaven is secured to me by Jesus, the Son of God. From this time may I appear before all men a decided follower of Christ ! I hope the Lord will receive me and keep me for ever, as His own child. For though I am the greatest of sinners, I bless the Almighty, and will thank Him for ever, that He has brought me out of darkness into marvellous light.” At his baptism he told his deluded countrymen “ that their shasters (sacred books), were all false ; but the shaster (the New Testament) of

* Missionary Records. India.

Jesus was certainly true.”* Many instances of conversion, equally interesting, are recorded in the excellent volume from which we have borrowed these extracts, and in other missionary publications.

In some districts, evangelical reformations on a large scale have been accomplished. The south of Ceylon Mission is the oldest Wesleyan mission station in Asia; it was established in 1814. The Tamul district of this society embraces the provinces of the north and eastern portions of the island of Ceylon. And in reference to this section of their mission field, the Bishop of Colombo, in his visitation journal, in 1846, is stated in the Wesleyan Missionary Report for 1851, to have said, “The Wesleyans found it an unoccupied field, and they entered in to save it, in their own way, of course; but well have they done their work. Heathenism is continually losing its hold on the native mind in these districts. There are many indications of it. Instead of five hundred, not fifty temples are kept up as they were. The head men desert them; the festivals are unheeded; some of the temples are already in ruins, and the cars are tumbling to pieces. Already Brahma boweth down, and Budha stoopeth. I was informed that there are not ten shrines maintained in the district around Batticaloa; and that the self-imposed tax, instead of producing, as of old, a thousand bushels of rice, now falls short of a hundred.” We are not without hope that the territorial extent of British rule, and the introduction of European languages and religious belief in India, will operate as pioneers to the march of Christianity; but it is to the preaching of Christ and Him crucified that we must look, as the mighty instrument which God has appointed to convert the blind and besotted Hindoos to Himself.

* Missionary Records. India.

India is a magnificent field for mission efforts. For some of our readers it may be necessary to invite attention to the vastness of the Indian territory, and the density of its population; and to state that "it is peopled by many different nations, speaking different languages; that it is a land of material splendours, and of magnificent resources; that its inhabitants possess and exhibit the chief intelligence and the highest civilization of Asia; that it presents the great battle-field, a very Armageddon, on which can be met and defeated the three great surviving systems of error, Hindooism, Budhism, and Mohammedanism, by the combined Anglo-Saxon Protestant nations of Britain, Germany, and North America."* According to recent information in the public journals, there are two hundred and twenty sovereign princes, rajahs, or chieftains, of different ranks in India. These princes govern upwards of six hundred thousand square miles of territory, and have at least forty millions of subjects.

7. Interesting statistics of Christianity in India "were printed first in the pages of the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, for November and December of 1851. From them it appears that, at that date, there were, in all India and Ceylon, 403 European missionaries, 551 native preachers, and 103,154 native Christians, the fruits of missionary labour." It is calculated that the number of missionaries in India at the present time is 429, and of native Christians, 107,000.† For some fields of evangelical toil, 100,000 native converts would be properly regarded as a proof of prosperity.

8. But in the vast dominions of India, teeming with

* Christian Missions in India, 1858. By R. C. Mather, M.A., Missionary to Northern India.

† Ibid.

hundreds of millions of immortal souls, amongst whom missionaries have been preaching the gospel for centuries, the aggregate number of their converts is an indication of comparatively little success. And the amazingly tardy progress of the gospel in those regions has long been, to every thoughtful Christian who has devoted prayerful attention to the subject, a theme of deep sorrow. In 1826, Dr. Marshman remarks, in a little book which he published, entitled, "Thoughts on Propagating Christianity among the Heathen :"—"It is a melancholy fact, that the actual conversion of the heathen in India bears little proportion to the vast sums raised by the friends of religion in Britain for this purpose." Is there not a cause? Yea, many causes combined have opposed and neutralized the benevolent plans and zealous efforts of evangelical agency.

(1.) *The opposition of the East India Company's Government to Christian Missions.* Before we record our remarks on this painful subject, we wish to caution the reader against supposing that all their transactions in India have been of a wrong character and pernicious tendency. Many of their doings have been just, liberal, and highly beneficial, in a temporal point of view, to their Indian subjects. Mr. Mather says, "I have been in India for twenty-four years, and have travelled through all Bengal, the North-West Provinces, and Central India, and I can testify not only that the people are in the main pleased with our Government, but that, in some of the native states—Oude, for instance,—again and again the wish was expressed that the East India Company would take the country. Our Government, as a whole, is far superior to any government the natives ever had before. It is a just Government; it is a humane Government; it is a Government that makes many sacrifices to promote the

good of the country, and, were it only as religious as it is just and beneficent, it would be all that India requires."

But all this, and a great deal more than this, every Christian Government is bound to do, by the principles of the gospel. Woe be to the ambassador of Christ if he preach not the gospel; and woe to the powers that be if they protect not the preacher of the gospel in the peaceful and loyal exercise of his holy calling. In this momentous duty the Company's Government has been lamentably deficient. We doubt not that Mr. Mather has substantial reasons for preferring the following grave charge against the Company, in regard to Christian efforts in India:—"The East India Company's entire policy, steadily and undeviatingly pursued for the last hundred years, has been an anti-missionary and anti-evangelization policy." Again, "Supposing that the Indian Government were purged of all direct connection with Hindooism and Mohammedanism, still in its treatment of missionaries and their converts, such is its spirit and bearing and administrative procedure, that it must be adjudged a colossal opponent to the religious well-being of the natives of India. . . . From that government the missionary has not only failed to obtain either help or favour, but not even that common modicum of justice which, in his social capacity as an intelligent and well-disposed member of civil society, he had a right to expect. In most large towns of North Western India there is what is called a Local Committee of Public Instruction. Of this body learned Hindoos, priests and pundits, or learned Mohammedans, are invited to be members, together with the servants of the Government; but never were the missionaries so honoured. There are also dispensaries maintained by government, the managers of which are selected by government out of the ranks of

Hindoos and Mohammedans and the Christian servants of Government; but no missionary is ever invited to co-operate. . . . In the Hindoo College at Calcutta, under the control of Government, a rule was made excluding Christian ministers from all share in the business of Instruction. This was strenuously resisted by some of the members of the Committee of Public Instruction; but still it remains the unchanged policy of the Indian Government down to the present moment (1858), readily to employ the ministers of the Hindoo and Mohammedan religions, and utterly to repudiate the services of those of their own faith!!! Just as missionaries are depreciated and thwarted, so native Christians, the converts of missionaries, are denied all the rights which, as good citizens, they are entitled to claim. . . . Their Christian profession, instead of being a recommendation to them, is, in reality, the greatest disqualification in the eyes of Government for any office in its gift." These deliberate and systematic forms of opposition to evangelical exertions on the part of Government could not fail to make a deep anti-christian impression on native minds. They would very naturally conclude, that whatever religion the members of the Government professed, they had no sincere desire to witness the diffusion of Christianity in the states of India.

(2.) *Another serious obstacle to the spread of Christianity among the Hindoos has been the patronage which the Government has lavished on idolatry.* The essential elements of Christianity and heathenism are so directly opposed to each other, that "the temple of God hath no agreement with idols." The British Government in India has nevertheless steadily manifested the gross and scandalous inconsistency of professing Christianity and upholding idolatry. From a time-serving principle, with a view to conciliate

the natives, and thereby to secure their own earthly dominion, the members of the Government hypocritically flattered the idolatrous Hindoos, and fostered their abominable superstitions. These charges are supported by the unexceptionable testimony of credible witnesses. Mr Mather says, "During the earlier periods, and, indeed down to the year 1835, the Indian Government was the great patron of the Hindoo superstition, repairing its temples, regulating its festivals, and paying the salaries of its priests." The Government also derived considerable revenue from idolatrous practices. The same gentleman adds, "When the writer went out to Northern India in 1833, the tax levied on the thousands of pilgrims who visit the junction of the rivers Jumna and Ganges, opposite to the town and fort of Allahabad, in the month of January of each year, was being collected by the officers of the East India Company. That Christian Government realized on each occasion of the bathing festival, from £10,000 to £15,000."

When the province of Orissa was subjected to the British Government in 1803, the servants of the Honourable Company virtually did homage to the idol Juggernaut. "Possession," says Hamilton, "was taken of the town and temple of Pooree by the British, September 18th, the sacred will of the idol having been first ascertained through the medium of the officiating priest." What a farce!* From the period of that guilty participation of an idolatrous act, the Government and its servants have openly cherished a favourable regard for the superstitious abominations of India. Mr. J. F. England, late missionary at Madras, says, "will it be believed that the repairs of those (heathen) temples are always effected under the direction of a

* *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, p. 609, 1840.

English functionary? that the ornaments of the idol are made by his direction? that the palanquin in which the idol is carried, and the car, with all its obscene emblems and gorgeous adornments, are under the superintendence of an officer of the British Christian Government? The table of the idol is under the same management; and almost every step taken, with reference to the temples, is under the seal, and by the direction, of English Government officers. The Brahmins, the officiating priests, are paid their wages by British functionaries; and (horrid to relate!) the base women of the temples, the wives of the gods, are neither admitted to, nor excluded from, those edifices, without the directions of English officers connected with the British Government.”*

The Government has required its servants to lend their countenance to idolatry, and to aid in its debasing rites and ceremonies. At the Wesleyan Missionary Meeting, which was held in Exeter Hall, May 4th, 1840, a report was read, from which we extract the following paragraph. “The Committee cannot close their notice of our missions on the continent of India, without once more adverting, with the strongest feelings of regret and indignation, to the continuance of the connection, in the Madras Presidency, between the British Government and Hindoo idolatry. Last year they expressed the hope that this great stain upon the national character, and formidable obstruction to the spread of the Gospel, would speedily be removed. The events of the year have, however, disappointed this expectation. Idolatrous ceremonies are still saluted by the guns of Fort St. George, Madras; the connection of the government and its servants with the various pagodas is as intimate as ever; Christian officers

Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, p. 531, 1840.

are still called to interfere in the interior management of native temples, and to join in heathen ceremonies.”* Mr. Samuel Hardy, Wesleyan missionary, complains loudly and justly of the tyranny of the Company’s Government in compelling professors of Christianity to give an apparent sanction, at least, to the abominable ceremonies of Hindooism. He mentions with horror, “that fifteen thousand persons had been coerced by the authority of the British Government, to attend the idolatrous festival of the idol *Sivan* at Tiruvalloor and were made to drag the ponderous car! Even those villages which professed Christianity, in some cases were not exempt.”†

But with frowning on Christian missionaries, smiling on Hindoo priests and Mohammedan pundits, and requiring its dependents to do the same, the Government has not been satisfied. It has honoured idolatry with liberal endowments. After what is stated above, with respect to the idol *Sivan*, Mr. Hardy says, “the Government allowed 8,750 rupees, or about £850 annually for the support of this abomination.” When the pilgrim tax was abolished in 1839, the Government enacted that fifty thousand rupees (equal to £5,000) were to be given annually by the Honourable Company, towards the establishment of Jugger-naut, from the regular revenue of the province, in furtherance of an engagement to that effect, when the province and temple came into their hands. It may be supposed by lax minded casuists, that the Government was under a moral obligation to keep their engagement in this case. We say not so. First, the Government did decidedly wrong in making such a covenant; and, secondly, the sooner a wicked covenant, which compromises the honour of God and the well-being of man is violated the

* Ibid, pp. 8, 9. † *Youth’s Instructor*, p. 38, 1837.

better. Men cannot be bound to transgress the known will of God, by compacts which they formed under the impulse of selfishness or ambition. Although hand join in hand to sin against the Lord, the contractors shall not go unpunished. Christians are commanded to be not partakers with other men's sins. He who presumes to transgress this law must suffer the penalty annexed thereto. In the Madras Presidency there are 8,292 idols and temples receiving from Government an annual pay of £87,678. In the Bombay Presidency there are 26,589 idols and temples under state patronage receiving grants to the amount of £30,387, to which must be added the allowance for temple lands, giving a total for the Bombay Presidency of £69,859. For the whole of the Company's territories there is annually expended in the support of idolatry, by the servants of the Company, the large sum of £171,558.*

The natural impression which this conduct of the Government is calculated to produce, on the native mind, is, that the representations and instructions of the missionaries do not accord with the views and wishes of the government. It is so interpreted by the Hindoos. "They regard," says the Wesleyan Missionary Report, noticed above, "the patronage and interference of Government as a decided proof of approbation. They say to the missionaries, 'our idolatry, as you term it, cannot be so utterly abominable as you say; for your Government supports it. In going about talking and giving books against our religion, you are opposing your own Government.'" In one of the "lying wonders" of Hindooism, it is stated that the English were once in great distress in Fort St. George, and near to being taken by the French. But according

* *Wesleyan Missionary Report*, pp. 155, &c., 1858.

to some wise native people, the governor sent them to beg help from the renowned goddess Yagattee, and promised in return that a proper annual offering should be kept up to her for ever. Then the goddess put fear into the hearts of the French, they retreated, and the fort was saved.

In reference to this idolatrous fable, a native gentleman addressed a letter to the Editor of the "Madras Courier," in which he says, "An English padre (gentleman) says to me, that to join so (as the Government officials and servants had done) in our religion, is an exceeding great sin against the will and commandment of the Christians' God; and moreover, also, he says, that this history (the above idle tale) is all nonsense, because Yagatta is only an idol, and has no power and no sense. But I do not believe this; because if it be not true, why does the Honourable Government do so?"* Immediately after the repeal of the shameful pilgrim tax, Mr. C. Lacey, writing from the temple of Juggernaut, in Orissa, says, "When you get this, which will be about two months hence, you may think that the pilgrims are passing in free to the Ruth festival, and that I am preaching and distributing tracts without having it said, 'If Juggernaut be not true, why do your Government take a tax of his pilgrims, and support him in all this glory?'" Sufficient has been said to prove that the attitude and conduct of the British Government, in relation to Hindoo idolatry, has presented a most formidable obstacle to the progress of Christianity. And it ill becomes worldly minded men who bear the Christian name, to taunt the heralds of the Gospel with want of success, when they themselves have been practically labouring to uphold that ungodly system which it has been the object of missionaries to overthrow.

* *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, p. 532, 1840.

(3.) In their anti-missionary measures, the Company's Government have had able and zealous champions to plead their unchristian cause in the English Parliament. During lengthy and animated debates on the subject, Sir Thomas Sutton is reported to have said, "Heaven is a palace to which there are many entrances; the Hindoos have one entrance, and the Christians have another." *Methodist Magazine*, p. 55, 1814. Some gentlemen pleaded that the conversion of the Hindoos to Christianity was literally impossible, without miracles; and unnecessary, as their morals were as good as those of the English. The attempt, it was warmly contended, was very dangerous, and would breed an overwhelming mutiny, which would overthrow British power in India. The orators tauntingly called their antagonists saints, and the missionaries Anabaptists and fanatics. One gentleman who had spent twenty-five years in India, and had but recently returned, writing on the subject, said, "Without doubt Bonaparte had some underhand influence in the question respecting the missionaries!!" This surely was giving the ambitious emperor of the French credit for less sagacity than he possessed. But what was it which the advocates for the Indian Missions demanded of the English Parliament? Simply "that the doors of India should not be barred to those benevolent individuals who were ready voluntarily to embark in any undertaking which was likely to produce inestimable benefits to its inhabitants." Could less than this be demanded, consistently with the loyalty of the churches to Jesus Christ? We think not. The battle between the *pro* and *con* missionary enterprize in the vast and populous regions of India has been sharply contested for very many years. The Church, with her spiritual weapons, which are mighty through God, has at length "overcome the world."

9. A brighter sun now shines on the long-benighted realms of India. In the Royal Proclamation which has inaugurated the returning reign of tranquillity in that recently distracted country, there is the following paragraph, "Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge all those who may be in authority under us, that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure. And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge." Already the fruit of this enlightened policy begins to "shake like Lebanon." Pentecostal showers are now falling on some sections of this long-benighted and sterile region. The *Bombay Guardian* reports that the Christianization of the Kols in the Chola Nagpore District is proceeding at a very rapid rate. Two thousand had been baptized six months ago. The number of those who have broken caste is also very large. Ninety were baptized in January last (1860.) A missionary writes that in the neighbourhood of Ranchee, the gospel is spreading like a fire in the jungle. As many as 800 villages have received the gospel. So many Kols were pouring into the station from the jungle, that three missionaries were occupied all day in giving them instruc-

tion. From the province of Pachete, Kabree-punthees, to the number of forty-six, out of eleven villages, have presented themselves for instruction. And they report that large bodies of this sect are ready to embrace Christianity. In Lucknow and the surrounding villages 89 natives have been baptized since the late mutiny.

CHAPTER IX.

A GLANCE AT THE ENCOURAGING RESULTS OF MODERN EVANGELICAL LABOURS IN CHINA.

1. Three formidable superstitions, which impede the Gospel in China. (1) Budhism, which is the popular religion. (2) Confucianism, which is followed by philosophers and the imperial court. (3) Mahommedanism, the fabrication of the notorious Arabian impostor. 2. Female infanticide. 3. The pernicious consequences of the quasi-missionary enterprises of Romanists. 4. The introduction of Christianity into China, by Protestant missionaries is of modern date. 5. Honourable testimony to the labours of missionaries under the direction of the London Missionary Society. *Hung-tsin-tseuen* the rebel reformer. 6. The moral prospects of China are brightening. 7. The limited success of the Gospel in China is no conclusive argument against its efficiency. The labours of Christian missionaries are rendered abortive, to an incalculable extent, by the Opium trade. 8. The signs of the times indicate that the way is gradually opening for the free introduction of the Gospel throughout this vast empire.

"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not."—Isaiah lxy. 1.

IN some respects China is the most interesting empire on the face of our globe. The population is estimated at three hundred and sixty millions, which are equal to one-third of the human family, and they occupy an area of about nine hundred million acres.

The title of the Emperor in full, is, "Holy Son of Heaven, sole Governor of the earth, and great Father of all his people." He is emperor, high priest of the empire, and is adored by the stupid Chinese as a god. They worship him and offer incense to him as to one of the chief deities. They have no sabbath, and probably have had none for thousands of years. They have no state

establishment ; but their religion, such as it is, is divided into three principal systems—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism.

1. Buddhism, which is followed by the great masses of the people, derives its name from Gotama Budha, a real historical person, who was born B. C., 624, at Kapilawastu, on the borders of Nepaul, Hindoostan. Many “lying wonders” concerning him have been invented by his idolatrous disciples. They pretend that having become a Budha he received a power by which he could perform any act whatever, and a wisdom by which he could see perfectly any object, or understand any truth to which he chose to direct his attention. His verbal instructions, real or fictitious, are contained in a collection of one hundred and eight large volumes. This voluminous work, as M. Huc informs us, is found in all the libraries of the great Buddhist convents. The finest edition is that published at Peking, at the imperial press. It is in four languages, Thibetan, Mongolian, Manchou, and Chinese. According to the Singhalese chronology, Budha died B. C. 543, in the eightieth year of his age ; several oriental authorities fix the period of his life several centuries earlier. It is difficult to explain how Budha can aid his worshippers, or even hear their prayers, since, according to his own system, he has ceased to exist!! His followers really worship him notwithstanding. The sacred books of Buddhism also are literally worshipped. The Bo-TREE, likewise, under which Budha is believed to have received his Budhaship, is an object of idolatrous devotion. Temples are erected to his honour throughout all the countries in which his system of superstition is established. The construction of temples and images of Gotama Budha, indeed, forms the chief employment to which the industry

and taste of the inhabitants of Eastern Asia are mainly directed. On these reputedly sacred edifices monarchs are proud to lavish their treasures.

The Buddhist system is essentially atheistical. It speaks of no self-existent, eternal Being; not even such an infinite nihilism (nothingness) as the Brahm of the Hindus. It is also a system of thorough materialism, the individual being viewed as possessed of all that goes to form a sentient being which ceases to exist at death, but he has no soul distinct from the body, or that will survive the death of the body. According to this theory there is no such thing as an immaterial spirit; but the moment a human being expires, his merit and demerit in its totality is transferred to some other being. The great object of the devout Buddhist is to obtain cessation of existence. He directs his whole efforts—not towards absorption, like the Brahman, but annihilation. Consequently, although there is much in the moral precepts of Buddhism which is pure and excellent, in its fundamental principles it is a gigantic system of atheism and superstition, spreading like an upas-tree over immense regions of Eastern Asia, embracing 369,000,000, or about one-third of the entire population of the globe within its fold, and shedding a blinding and destructive blight on all that dwell beneath its deadly shade.

Buddhism was imported from Ceylon or India into China about the Christian era, and is known in that country by the name of the religion of Fo. The priests of this stupid and wicked system are very numerous; and in many respects bear a striking resemblance to the Roman Catholic priesthood. Like them they live in a state of celibacy—they are under a strict vow of poverty. Copies of their sacred books, used at public worship, are written in

the Pali language, which the people do not understand; and as those books are seldom interpreted in the vernacular tongue, the knowledge of Buddhist principles, possessed by the great mass of the community, is very imperfect. They are strongly attached to relics, which they preserve and contemplate with profound reverence. The most celebrated relic now in existence among them is the Dalada, or left canine tooth of Budha! The priests of this infidel fraternity in China "prefer garments which are torn and tattered, and have been rejected by others!!*" It is much more agreeable to carnally-minded and superstitious men, to clothe themselves in rags and to glory in their shame than to worship God in spirit and in truth.

2. *Confucianism*, which is followed by the philosophers and nobles of the court. This system derives its name from Confucius, who was an eminent Chinese philosopher. He was born B.C. 551, in the principality of Loo, which is now the province of Shan-tung. He was descended from a highly respectable family, which traced its pedigree to the ancient emperors. Huc, the Romish missionary, informs us that a tablet to his memory is found in every school; that both the masters and the pupils prostrate themselves before the venerated name of Confucius at the beginning and end of each class; and that his image is found in all the academies, places of literary resort, and examination halls. All the towns have temples erected to his honour, and more than 300,000,000 of men with one voice proclaim him saint. His system was more properly a theory of ethical and political philosophy than of religion. He carefully taught the duty of children to their parents, and that of subjects to their rulers; but he strangely omitted to inculcate the duty of mankind to

* Faiths of the world, Articles, Budha and Budhists. National Cyclo.

their heavenly Parent and Governor. The existence of God and a future state he passed over in silence. The theory of government which he constructed is a perfect despotism, and highly flattering to the powers that be. It is consequently admired and inculcated by the State. The works of Confucius have become the primers of schools and the text book of academies during many ages. The school boy learns them by heart, the literati make them the theme of their writings, and the Doctor seeks his highest glory in publishing an elegant commentary on them. With this extravagance they are not satisfied. They even render him divine honours, having dedicated to his worship upwards of one thousand five hundred and sixty temples. At the spring and autumnal sacrifices they offer to him 6 bullocks, 27,000 pigs, 5,800 sheep, 2,800 deer, and 27,000 rabbits, making a total of 62,606 animals immolated every year to the manes of a fellow man, besides 27,600 pieces of silk, all provided by the Government, exclusive of the numerous offerings of private persons. In this idolatrous manner are the revenues of both prince and people lavished, to honour the memory of a man who taught kings how to oppress their subjects, but never instructed subjects how to assert and maintain their rights.*

3. *Mohammedanism*, a compound system of truth and error, artfully compiled in the sixth century by the notorious impostor Mahomet. All these systems are idolatrous, consequently the land is full of idols.

2. One of the blackest crimes of which the Chinese are guilty, is female infanticide. At Keau Yingchoo, in the province of Fokien, five days from Canton, there are said to be 500 or 600 infanticides per month. They are

* See Faiths of the world, Articles—Confucius and Confucians.

all females. They are drowned, or strangled, or suffocated with a wet cloth, or with rice put into their little mouths as soon as they are born. We make these statements on the authority of Mr. Smith, an American missionary in China. Having thus murdered their helpless offspring, they are commonly cast, like so many dead dogs, into the open streets, where they lie exposed till the public scavengers convey them away in carts. No police inquiries are instituted to bring the parties who have been guilty of deeds so atrocious to light. The cases are silently passed by as ordinary events in every day life. So true it is, that the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. And it is worthy of remark, that "the seclusion of the Chinese from other nations, has not preserved them from the vices which elsewhere prevail."

3. In this vast empire the Romish missionaries have long been plying their elastic arts, and have gained a great number of disciples. In 1810 they had 215,000 natives within their pale. But of the moral standard of these native converts, no man, who is conversant with his Bible, and who knows what Popery is, can form a very high opinion. Even in our own Protestant country, which is brilliantly illuminated with the Bible, unblushing Popery openly perverts the word of God, traffics extensively in the spiritual wares of Rome; and, in a bad sense, "becomes all things to all men," that she may allure some into her decoy. Architecture, sculpture, painting, engraving, carving, gilding, poetry, music, unknown tongues, incense, celibacy, virginity, grandeur, meanness, poverty, luxury, with an endless variety of devices, which we cannot conveniently set down in a technical catalogue, are all ingeniously applied with a view to work on the passions, to excite admiration, and to attract an alliance. What

expedients then have not the agents of Rome tried in China, where darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people, to gain a firm footing in that populous realm? They would not be content to "compass sea and land to make one proselyte," but many of the means which they employed to accomplish their designs were decidedly anti-christian and fraught with delusion.

About four years ago a Romish missionary is said to have returned from China to France, when he reported that he had the satisfaction to know that his efforts to evangelize the Chinese had not been altogether in vain. While he was in China he practised as a physician. Many parents brought their children to him to be treated medically for their various diseases. He availed himself of the opportunities thus afforded of baptizing the young children so brought to him, to which rite the parents offered no objection, as they understood the baptismal service to be a medical ceremony for the benefit of their children's health. From these smuggled regenerations the doting priest calculated on a rich harvest of Christian results! But the reader is aware that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." According to this fixed law, we must expect that corrupt seed will either unfruitfully rot, or if it vegetate, it will only yield a sickly crop of superstition. The seed of superstition never yielded a harvest of rational piety.

4. *The introduction of Protestant Christianity into China, is of modern date.* The first missionary was Dr. Morrison, who was sent out by the London Missionary Society, in 1807, and he arrived at his destination on September 4th of the same year. The first native convert, Tseu Ako, was a printer; and was engaged by Dr. Morrison to print the New Testament, in 1814, the translation of which the Doctor had completed in the preceding year. The second

convert was Leang Afah, the fruit of Dr. Milne's labours at Malacca. After his conversion, Afah returned to his native city, Canton, where he preached Christ, and wrote a book, entitled, "Scripture Lessons, or Good Words to admonish the Age," great numbers of which he distributed in Canton. A copy of this work fell into the hands of a man who read it carefully, and made the contents his own. That very person, thus taught, became, and is now, the leader of the extraordinary movement which is revolutionizing the empire. For several years the work of conversion proceeded but slowly. In 1834 there was a little society of ten converts. After the late war with England, the English were allowed to enter and trade with five large ports:—Canton, containing a population of 2,000,000; Amoy and Fuh-chou-foo, in a province containing 15,000,000; Nangpo, where the most polished and ingenious Chinese reside. The province contains 26,000,000; and Shanghai, a city of great influence, and called "the gate of the empire," in a province containing 72,000,000. Missionaries were not allowed to traverse the empire: but native Christians might; and Chinese from all parts of the empire frequent these ports for purposes of trade! &c. In 1845, an edict was passed which allows natives to profess Christianity. These arrangements gave the heralds of the gospel indirect access to the interior of the country.

5. *"It is to the devoted and dauntless pioneers of the London Missionary Society, that the Chinese are indebted for the first translation of the Holy Scriptures into the most difficult language of man; and to those who have entered into their labours for this version's having been brought to a state of unimpeachable perfection. How hard must Dr. Morrison have studied and laboured, to select out of far more than*

twenty thousand symbolical characters, those which are the best fitted to express the meaning of the whole Bible! It deserves special notice, that the very year which saw the word of God take its destined place as a standard of lingual purity, on the shelf with the national classics, saw also the outburst of a revolutionary movement, which beginning with the overthrow of idolatry, may, without extravagance, be expected to end in the establishment of the worship of Christ.

It seems plain that for whatever religious knowledge Hung-tsiu-tseuen, the leader of this astonishing movement possesses, he is, under God, indebted principally to Dr. Milne, from whose first and only native convert, Leang Afah, he received those instructions which exempt his present enterprise from the stigma of lawless rebellion, and afford the fairest pledge of its utility and success."—*Patriot*.

While this extraordinary man, and his numerous and victorious host, declare an exterminating war against idolatry, believe in the unity and supremacy of God, the doctrines taught in the "ten commandments," the mission of Christ, cordially acknowledge Protestant Christians as brethren, and are powerfully influenced by the articles of their creed—it is to be deeply lamented that they entertain many erroneous views, which constitute a serious drawback to their faith. We are disposed to think that a disease with which the chief was affected several years ago, has somewhat disordered his brain, and led him into certain visionary notions. To correct the errors among his followers, no remedy is so appropriate as the New Testament Scriptures. And the British Churches have printed, and we believe distributed among the Chinese, a million copies of this lamp of Divine Truth.

6. The face of the abyss, which was covered with

darkness, is now brightening. The holy leaven is cast into the meal, and the mysterious process of fermentation is going on in the celestial empire, and visibly agitating the mass from the centre towards the circumference. Should the arms of the military reformer be crowned with ultimate success, political and religious arrangements will undergo a sudden and a mighty change. The wall of exclusiveness, behind which the Chinese have been entrenched for ages, will be broken down. Popery will probably be compelled either to reform or to retire. Idolatry, whether Romish or Pagan, will be allowed no quarter. To Protestant nations the Government will undoubtedly be friendly, and all parts of the empire, we may reasonably predict, will be open to Protestant missionaries. The nefarious, contraband opium trade, will be annihilated. "Many will run to and fro in the earth, and knowledge will be increased. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." Isaiah xxxv. 12.

7. From the very limited success of Christian efforts in China, a plausible objection may be offered to the moral power of the Gospel. It is, however, an easy task to satisfy reasonable minds that the objection is based on a false foundation. If, during the last forty years the agents of the London Missionary Society, assisted by those of kindred institutions, have been labouring assiduously for the evangelization of the Chinese; it should be borne in mind that carnally-minded politicians and avaricious merchants, who have enjoyed the title of Christians,

have determinedly pursued a course which was powerfully calculated to neutralize the wisest and the most benevolent exertions of the missionaries. We allude to the Opium Trade. The gross and deliberate wickedness of this branch of wholesale traffic is legitimately inferred from the extremely deleterious character of the drug. We have the testimony of many eminent men that it is a powerfully stupefying and deadly poison. Mr. Majoribanks, President of the Select Committee at Canton, says that opium, except when used medicinally, can "only be considered as a pernicious poison." "Opium," says one of the literati of Nankin, "is a poisonous drug: in comparison with arsenic, tenfold the greater poison." Mons. Huc, in his *Chinese Empire*, remarks, "the Chinese are indebted to England for a new system of poisoning." "Opium-smoking is not, as some suppose, similar to tobacco-smoking, where the smoke is merely taken into the mouth and forthwith puffed out again. In the case of opium, the fumes are inhaled into the lungs by a deep-drawn breath and retained as long as possible. There they act on the nervous fibres that are spread over the extensive membrane which lines every cell of the lungs."* Physicians of first-rate eminence in their profession, have declared that opium sends its victims to the grave in ten years on an average. These victims are calculated to be about five hundred thousand annually!!

Destructive to human health and life as the opium traffic is, it has been encouraged by the Indian Government for purposes of revenue, and connived at by our consuls in China. Its importation from British ports in India into China, has increased forty fold since the begin-

* "What is the Opium Trade," by Donald Mathieson, Esq., formerly of China.

ning of the present century. In 1800, opium was entered on the books of the Custom House as a medical drug. Then only 2,000 chests were exported, now the exports amount to 80,000 chests. Indeed the drug forms the great bulk of the returns for Chinese tea and silk, amounting as it does to £8,000,000, while the export of all British produce and manufactures to China averages little more than £2,000,000. With the rapid increase of this deleterious article into the Chinese empire, there is, of course, a corresponding intemperate consumption of it among the people. From a missionary point of view, the consequences are disastrous beyond calculation. "According to the most unexceptionable testimony of merchants, travellers, physicians, Government servants, missionaries, and Chinese statesmen, the vice, the misery, and the destruction of human life resulting from this indulgence it is almost impossible to estimate. Public sentiment in China is strongly opposed to the trade. It is, consequently, one of the greatest obstacles in the way of Christian missions; for our countrymen there are known only as vendors of opium—the curse of China, or as preachers of Christianity. The imperial Government, too, has firmly opposed the trade for more than sixty years, and declared it contraband."* Ignorant and imbecile as the Emperor is, he has discernment enough to see and lament that the opium trade, like a desolating pestilence, is annually sweeping hundreds of thousands of his subjects into an untimely grave. Is it any marvel if the Chinese hate us and spurn the gracious message of salvation from the lips of Christian missionaries?

1840 and 1842 witnessed the opium war. This was followed by a treaty with China, which provided that all

* *Christian World*, Oct. 21st, 1859.

smuggling was to cease. But although the trade was illegal, it was carried on clandestinely with increased vigour, till 1858, when it was legalized. After this manner has the deadly drug been introduced into the Chinese empire, and her statute laws been outraged by professing Christians for two successive generations. This, no doubt, is one reason, and a principal reason too, for the exclusive policy of China which has prevented the free intercourse of missionaries with her population.

On this momentous question that able Journal—the *Leeds Mercury*, for Nov. 30th, 1858, says, “Now we think the witnesses we are about to quote make it very plain that the Opium Traffic is the greatest possible obstacle to the efforts of the missionary, and to the reception of the Holy Scriptures by the Chinese. The difficulties it creates are of two kinds. First, opium-smoking is a grievous temptation and snare to converts and inquirers. The Rev. James Johnston, of the Free Church of Scotland, lately a missionary at Amoy, says, on this head :— ‘ We have been called to weep over some spirits dragged by this vice from what seemed the very gates of Paradise to what we fear was the pit of perdition.’ But there is another and far more effectual way whereby the opium trade impedes the spread of gospel-light and truth. In China, and as regards the Chinese, we are a nation of opium merchants. Our great trade in China is the opium trade. We have enterprised, smuggled, bribed, negotiated, and warred with them, to uphold and extend this traffic. Can we wonder that they refuse to believe that the Bible and the faith we offer them can be pure, holy, and divine? Their moral sense, low and degraded as it is, is scandalised and outraged by our pursuit of gain, with such entire disregard of their laws and treaty rights, and of their

morals, happiness, and lives. Mr. Johnston says, 'Every Christian church that is known in China makes it an invariable rule that no man who smokes opium shall ever be admitted as a member. And this rule is found necessary, not only because of the foreign estimate of the habit, but because the moral tone of the people of China would be justly offended at the toleration of the vice. But it is vain to bring forward proofs of the known and universal feeling against this opium trade. You cannot mix in a Chinese mob, or enter the houses of gentlemen, without being convinced of it. It was the only ground of hostility I ever found in travelling in China, and I found a sure way to win the hearts of the people if I disclaimed all sympathy with the opium dealers, and denounced the trade. The most painful feature in this popular feeling against opium is the hostility or contempt it excites towards our country, and *the suspicion it brings on the Gospel as preached by Englishmen*. It lies at the root of much of the unpopularity of our countrymen; and I have often been interrupted in preaching the Gospel, as every missionary in China has been interrupted with the question, "Why preach to us? Go tell your countrymen to bring no more opium here.'"

"Nor is it ministers and missionaries only who perceive that the opium trade is antagonistic to the success of the Gospel in China. At a public meeting lately held in Sheffield, Canon Sale said, on taking the chair, 'Several years ago, long before he knew Sheffield, he had the matter brought before him in a very striking manner by a captain in the marines. He spoke to the captain on the introduction of missionaries into China, and the captain replied, "Nonsense, you need not send missionaries to China, so long as you send opium there." For those

who have given an attentive perusal and consideration to the preceding testimonies, we do not feel that we need add anything to make the facts more plain, or to enforce the necessary inference—that the opium trade” is a serious obstacle to Christianity, and must be abolished before the Word of the Lord can have free course in that vast country. “We repeat, the Christian people of these islands can uproot this desolating scourge. By prayer they can move the hand that moves the world. By memorials and petitions they can bring an influence to bear on the administrative policy of this country which neither Cabinet, Parliament, nor Indian Council can successfully or long withstand.” May our merciful God hasten the day.

8. We have cause for thankfulness that passing events are bringing this vast empire within the circle of international treaties and stipulations, which we trust will ere long open a way for the free introduction of the gospel. By the late treaties of Lord Elgin, the missionaries may now pursue their sacred labours in fourteen cities, under the protection of the British flag. By these treaties religious freedom is also guaranteed to the Chinese, so that natives may embrace Christianity, and labour to promote it, without penalty or molestation; and missionaries have free access to all parts of China.* Under date, Fuh Chau, China, Nov. 22, 1858, Osman C. Baker, D.D., Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says, “Distance, which once placed China beyond the reach of Christendom, is now almost annihilated by the combined agencies of steam and electricity. The exclusive policy of China, which so long has prevented foreign intercourse with her people, is now laid aside, and the imperial decree has gone forth,

* *The Wesleyan Times*, March 21st, 1859.

declaring that henceforth and FOR EVER Christianity may be practised and propagated throughout the empire!" And now, to use the appropriate language of Lord Shaftesbury on this great question, "It is the solemn duty of all Evangelical Protestant Churches to employ the holy and benevolent means prescribed by their common Saviour, for extending the matchless blessings of His grace to the multitudinous people of that vast empire." Nor shall their labours of love be abortive. Before them the great mountain of Chinese prejudice and superstition shall become a plain. By their spiritual culture shall that ancient and vast wilderness, which for three thousand years has been overgrown with thorns and briars, be converted into a fruitful field, and be covered with "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." May the present war of England and France with China be overruled by a watchful and benevolent Providence, for the speedy enlightenment and evangelization of that ancient and mighty empire.

CHAPTER X."

THE GOSPEL HAS PROVED THE POWER OF GOD UNTO
SALVATION TO MANY OF THE ABORIGINES OF THE
AMERICAN CONTINENT AND THE ISLANDS OF FIJI.

1. Success in the Indian Missions in the British provinces. Statement of Peter Jacobs, a converted Indian Chief. Extracts from the Wesleyan Missionary Report for 1851. 2. Extraordinary achievements of the Gospel in the Islands of Fiji. (1) The Fijians, in their native state, were a terror to civilized navigators. (2) A ship's crew murdered and devoured. A delightful change effected by the Gospel. (3) Thirty years ago the name of Christ not known in Fiji. Now 54,281 profess Christianity. In their heathen state they are cannibals of the most revolting class. A man killed, baked, and ate his own wife. (4) Of native teachers and evangelists there are now employed 250 persons. The new converts generously strive to support the institutions of the Gospel.

"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.—Isaiah lii. 10.

1. If with regard to America, we confine our remarks to the British provinces, we shall be able to produce clear and gratifying evidence, that the gospel is adapted to enlighten, reclaim, and renovate the most wild and savage children of nature. Before the light of Christian revelation

"Shot athwart the gloom profound,"

the native tribes, from their childhood, were not only in heathen darkness, but they were trained to injustice, ferocity, revenge, and murder. To literature and the arts of peace they were strangers. Forbearance under injuries, and forgiveness of wrongs were lessons which were never taught them. Instead of being instructed how to apply

the ploughshare and the pruning-hook, they were early initiated in the use of the tomahawk and the scalping-knife. Addicted to habits of indolence and improvidence, they depended for a precarious supply of their wants on the chase and the spontaneous productions of nature. In their social manners they were extremely vindictive and cruel. A few years ago I heard Peter Jacobs, a converted chief, preach a missionary sermon in the Wesleyan Centenary Chapel, St. George's East, London, when he gave an appalling description of the inhuman habits of his own tribe, in their native state. In this sinful and miserable condition they were found by Protestant missionaries. From this deep abyss of crime and wretchedness, many of them have been lifted by "the gospel lever," to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. This statement may be amply confirmed by a few brief extracts from the Wesleyan Missionary Report for 1851.

"The *Alderville Mission* has been prosperous from the commencement. At the aforesaid date the Indian society consisted of six classes, with their native leaders, numbering seventy members. In the Industrial School for the Indian youth, connected with this mission, 'a number of young persons had been brought under religious influence.'

"At *St. Clair*, the Indians were improving; and the missionary reported that the members generally were regular in their attendance on the means of grace; and that many of them enjoyed much of the love of God, and had bright prospects of heaven.

"At the *Muney Mission*, the work of God among the Oneidas was in an improved state. There was a pleasing stability in the conduct of religious professors at the station; and the congregations were usually large and attentive. Among the *Ojibeways* there were some devoted and faithful members.

At *Saugeeng*, several church-members had died, and in their last moments they bore a good testimony to the power of Divine grace to sustain them, and to afford them a cheering prospect of heaven. One good woman, Ogemah Ekegedooqua (which signifies the chief speaking woman), could say, "All her fears were gone, she loved not this world, she was ready to go at the bidding of the Lord, and take her place above." "Another, an assistant leader," says the missionary, "could speak as clearly, and rejoice as fully in redeeming grace, when near his end, as any person I ever saw. He attended the Quarterly Meeting on the day of his decease, and spoke freely of the love of Christ in his soul. A few moments before he expired, he called his friends around him, and gave them his dying charge, exhorted them to be faithful unto death, and to meet him in heaven." One more quotation shall suffice.

"*Grand River*. Among the Indians of this station, the principles of Christianity have long been in operation, during which time many of them have passed from the shores of mortality to the regions of eternal day. There were on this station among the Indians seven classes, containing one hundred and thirty-six members." From these instances of success what might not have been achieved by the first adventurers who visited America, had they been genuine Christians, and animated by an enlightened and liberal policy? When the Spanish and English navigators first appeared on the coast of the western world, they were regarded by the astonished natives as a superior race of beings, and contemplated with the greatest reverence. With what facility the explorers might have turned these aboriginal views and feelings to the spiritual advantage of the newly discovered and interesting tribes. But alas! for the unfortunate lords of the new world: they

were betrayed, hunted, massacred, by troops of lawless and exterminating invaders ; or reduced to rigorous slavery, and dragooned into the Roman Catholic Church by the Pope, aided by a fanatical and brutal soldiery. These charges are fully sustained by Dr. Robertson, in his "History of America." Happily, other weapons, with better success, are now employed to induce these long-neglected and much injured people to enter the fold of Christ. "Wisdom is justified of her children." The fruits of the uncorrupted gospel are alike honourable to the missionaries and their converts.

2. Let us now take a brief view of the remarkable work of grace, which has recently taken place in the islands of Fiji.

(1). Previous to the introduction of the gospel among those savage people, like the New Zealanders, they were a terror to civilized navigators. They were fierce, treacherous, warlike, and strongly addicted to cannibalism. To merchants, travellers, and seamen, who hovered around their shores, these known qualities of the inhabitants were no less repulsive than the loveliness of their country was inviting. But deep as was the "horrible pit" into which they had unhappily plunged, the glorious gospel has extricated many thousands of them from their degrading and perilous condition. Of the gracious and powerful influence which the gospel has shed on these barbarous and wretched heathen, the following narrative furnishes a delightful illustration :—

(2). "A Nantucket whale ship was at one time wrecked upon one of the Fiji Islands. The crew escaped in their boats to the shore, and, before they were discovered by the natives, they succeeded in constructing a fort for their defence. The natives, however, soon found them, and

after a long and bloody battle, all the sailors were slain, except two little boys, whose lives they spared. One after the lapse of many years, escaped on board a whale-ship, which stopped at the island. The other has never been heard from.

“Such was the condition of these islands, when the English missionaries, taking their lives in their hands, went among them to christianize the inhabitants. The missionaries were ridiculed, opposed, and traduced by thousands at home, and they endured every species of privation and hardship from the habitations of cruelty, in the midst of which they took up their abode. God smiled, however, upon their exertions, and soon these men and women turned from their idols and their sins, and cultivated the arts of peace. A few years after the missionaries had commenced their labours, an American whale-ship came in sight of an unknown island in the Pacific. . . . They had been for six months cruising in search of their gigantic game without having seen any land. Scurvy, that terrible scourge of seamen, had seized one after another of the crew, till there was not enough left to navigate the vessel in safety. Scurvy is a disease caused by living a long time upon salted provisions, without any vegetables; and the sufferers are almost immediately restored to health, when they can breathe the fresh air of the land, and eat freely of fruits and herbs. Here was this ship, several thousand miles from the South American coast. The crew were emaciated and dying. Before them rose in all the splendour of tropical luxuriance, one of those islands of the ocean, which appeared to the mariner, weary with gazing for months upon the waste of waters, like the Garden of Eden. But they dared not approach those shores. The club of the savage, and the demoniacal revels of the

cannibals, dancing and shouting around their roasting victims, was more to be dreaded than death by slow and lingering approaches in the ship. With their glass they could distinctly see the clear streams of water foaming down their channels in the mountains. Meadows faded away in the distance, enchanting the eye with their shady groves and their rich verdure. The cocoa-nut tree reared its grateful head upon the beach, laden with its precious and its life-giving treasures; and forests rich with tropical fruits, juicy and luscious, were everywhere spread around. Emaciated and dying for want of proper food and medicine, the men crawled from their berths, and gazed with wishful eyes upon the tantalizing scene. Slowly they were borne along by a gentle breeze, and forest-crowned headlands, and luxuriant valleys, and groves bending beneath the burden of fruit, glided by, like the changes of a kaleidoscope; and still no canoe pushed off from the shore, and no huts of the natives were to be seen. They began to cherish the hope that the island might be uninhabited, and cautiously approached it. But ere long they saw canoes upon the beach and smoke here and there ascending from the cocoa-nut groves; but still, to their astonishment, no natives made their appearance; no sound of human voices reached them from the shore. As they rounded a promontory, which opened before them a quiet and lovely bay, a thickly-clustered village suddenly opened to their view, and in the centre of it was reared a Christian Church. A simultaneous shout of joy rang through the ship as the cry passed from stem to stern, 'The missionaries are here!' It was the Sabbath, and the natives had learned the divine command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." And the temptation of a ship entering the bay, did not allure a single canoe to leave the shore.

The crew were almost crazed with joy at this sudden change in their prospects. They soon cast anchor, furled their sails, and entering the ship's boats, went on shore. As soon as the natives were informed of their sick and suffering condition, they received them with the utmost hospitality, and supplied them with all the fresh fruits and vegetables which they needed. The next day the natives aided the emaciated crew in taking a sail from the ship, and spreading a large tent upon the green grass on the banks of a mountain stream. And here the crew reposed in inexpressible luxury. They bathed themselves in the pure water, and quaffed it in its freshness and its coolness. They rolled with childish glee upon the green grass. Cocoa-nuts, and bananas, and lemons, and oranges, and other luscious fruits of the tropics were brought to them in great abundance by the friendly natives. In a few days, the disease which had brought so many of them to the verge of the grave, began to disappear. The missionaries, from their little stock of medicines, administered to their wants, and treated them with fraternal kindness. In the course of two or three weeks all were restored to health and vigour. They filled their casks with fresh water, laid in stores of vegetables, supplied themselves with pigs and poultry; and then, with invigorated bodies, and rejoicing spirits, they raised their anchors, unfurled their sails and departed on their adventurous way." This is a glorious development of the gospel of Christ. "Peace on earth and good will to man."

(3) "Thirty years ago," says the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, "the name of Christ was not known in Fiji, and for some years afterwards the people appeared almost impervious to the influence of religion. But a day of visitation has at length arrived, and those who have sown

in tears reap in joy. About one fourth of the entire population of the group have abandoned heathenism, and earnestly desire to be instructed in the saving truths of Christianity." The (Fiji) District Meeting says, "in our several circuits we have already 54,281 professing Christians."* Some idea may be formed of the horrible wickedness which prevailed among the Fijians in their heathen state from their shocking appetite for human flesh. Mr. Moore, in a communication dated March, 1857, says, "People think that Fiji is saved. But look at her again; more than half this circuit (Rewa) are still heathen, killing and devouring each other daily. Not more than twenty miles from the mission house twenty men were killed only this month and eaten!" An instance of cruelty, still more appalling, is recorded by Mr. Wilson. "Last Lord's-day," says Mr. W., "I dined with a man who made his wife prepare her own oven, and when she had completed her task he killed her, and put her into it, and continued to eat her flesh three days! Between meals he went and sought yams and roots to eat with her. This is too horrid to write, but just fancy my feelings while sitting in his presence and seeing his fierce black eyes fixed upon me. I was not afraid, but felt something like being in the presence of Satan's firstborn. I felt it good to preach Christ to him as his Saviour and Judge; and whilst doing so his eyes appeared softened."† What a mercy that this black and dreadful scenery is relieved by a few bright and smiling spots, as the dreariness of the desert is enlivened by the green and beautiful oasis. We rejoice to hear that from among the benighted and barbarous Fijians a teacher has been raised up, who has

* *Wesleyan Methodist Mis. Report*, p. 144, 1858. † *Ibid*, p. 140.

become an able and successful preacher, and has visited the several provinces of Australia, and there pleaded the cause of his wretched countrymen.

(4) Of native teachers and evangelists, the same document states, "there are now in all about 250 employed." Another pleasing feature of the work is the readiness of the people to provide for the support of these agents. A missionary writes: "Our converts are anxious themselves to pay the teachers, and to help in contributions as far as possible. This year, by the blessing of God, we hope to clear all expenses except the missionary's salary." And again: "Our native teachers said to me, 'now we know that true religion is getting into the people's hearts, when they are beginning to give their most precious things to God: it was never like this before.' Here, therefore, it is plain that things are taking the right course. A foundation is laid for a native ministry, supported by native churches." Here we have one of the strongest proofs on record, of the gospel's complete adaptation to reclaim and transform the most depraved and wretched tribes of man.

The work of grace is still progressing favourably in these late benighted and cruel islands. From the "Wesleyan Missionary Report" for 1859, we make the following extracts:—"The work of God in the Fiji District is still rapidly advancing." The letters from the missionaries are of a spirit-stirring character. Lakemba Circuit reports, "we have not to report a large increase to the number of professing Christians in this circuit, all the islands belonging to it having for some years previously been called such. . . . Facts warrant the conclusion that throughout the length and breadth of the circuit spiritual religion had never a better prospect of success." "Rewa Circuit. Three years ago this circuit was all heathen,

with the exception of some forty souls. Now we number about twenty-three thousand who bow the knee to Jehovah, and listen to the preaching of Christ crucified. True, the great majority are only nominally Christian, but there is all the difference between the Fijian bowing the knee and his heathen neighbour, that there is between the maniac amongst the tombs and the maniac at Christ's feet. Three years ago we had thirty-five members scattered through the circuit, now we number about 2,000, who evidence a desire to flee from the wrath to come by a consistent walk." "Bua Circuit.—The statistics show an increase of upwards of 800, who have turned from the pollution of heathenism to the profession of Christianity. In this part of Fiji, as well in the Yasava group of islands, the faith of the heathen in their former vanities and vile superstitions is completely shaken, and they freely confess that they believe Christianity will soon subdue all Fiji. God is preparing His way before His people. At one place 400 have made a profession of religion, built a chapel, and have sent to say, 'all things are now ready, send us a teacher!'" At this good news from the far country of Fiji, well may we exclaim with mingled emotions of astonishment and joy, "What hath God wrought!" What a glorious proof we have here, that Christianity is the grand instrument, wielded by Omnipotence and grace, for overthrowing the vilest institutions of heathenism, and for transforming the most degenerate types of fallen man into the moral image of their Creator. A reformation like this was never achieved by any ancient or modern appliance of infidelity. For enlightening man's conscience, taming his ferocious passions, subduing his headstrong will, and renewing his soul in righteousness and true holiness, Christianity stands unrivalled and alone.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EFFICIENCY OF THE GOSPEL FOR PROMOTING THE SALVATION OF MANKIND IS STRIKINGLY CONFIRMED BY PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE. OTHER GLORIOUS PROOFS OF THE MIGHTY ENERGY OF THE GOSPEL ARE, THE MULTIPLICATION, STABILITY, AND INCREASING STRENGTH OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

1. God only knoweth the heart of man. 2. Good fruit indicates a good tree; and a holy life a good and honest heart. 3. The power of the Gospel further demonstrated by individual experience. 4. Divine appointments ensure success. Three powerful causes which operate against the permanency and prosperity of Christian Churches 1 The ravages of death. (1) Bills of mortality. (2) Mortality of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. (3) Progress of the Primitive Methodist Community. (4) Prosperity of kindred Churches. (5) The mortality of Church Members not sufficiently considered. 2. Apostasy. (1) It is the duty of every candidate for Heaven to be faithful unto death. (2) Apostasy fearfully prevalent. [3] The influence of example is powerful for good or for evil. (4) What Church has not suffered through unstable members? 3. Persecution. (1) By the Jews. (2) By Pagans. (3) By Mohammedans. (4) By nominal Christians.

“When he (Barnabas) came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad.” Acts xi. 23.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. v. 1.

1. Although it is the peculiar prerogative of God to search the heart of man, and to know infallibly who are, and who are not, Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile, there are, nevertheless, external marks by which the moral condition of one man is indicated to other men. To caution His disciples against deceitful teachers our Lord says, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing; but inwardly they are ravening

wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."—Matt. vii. 15—18. The term "fruits" in this passage is used figuratively, and signifies moral actions: And it requires no profound reasoning to lead us to the conclusion, that the quality of the heart will impress itself, under ordinary circumstances, on the visible life. "A man's works," says one, "are the tongue of his heart, and tell honestly whether he is corrupt or pure." The judgment formed of a man by his general conduct is warranted by our Divine Teacher. "If the judgment be not favourable to the person, that is his fault, as you have your opinion of him from his works, *i.e.* the confession of his own heart."

2. The good tree represents the good man. The root of this tree is nourished, and its sap is purified, by the Spirit of God. Its fruits are therefore sound, lovely, and wholesome. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." These are the glorious external evidences of internal goodness. When a chronometer indicates true time on its dial, it is a proof that its hidden motions are regular and accurate. And when the general tenor of a man's life harmonizes with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, we set him down for a genuine Christian. To act otherwise, to suspect his motives, while his conduct is unimpeachable, would be a gross breach of evangelical charity. "Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." If charity sees a man whose

behaviour is right, she gives him credit for sincerity, and leaves his unexpressed intentions to be explored by the Searcher of hearts. How did Barnabas see the grace of God among the Christians of Antioch? He saw it reflected in the holy and happy lives of the new converts. The existence of the gracious principles of light, life, purity, and joy in their hearts, was demonstrated by a thorough reformation in their moral conduct. The glorious work of grace without furnished satisfactory proof of a corresponding transformation within. In writing to the Corinthian Church, the Apostle Paul confidently refers to the practical piety of his converts, as a conclusive evidence of his apostleship. "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us; written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."—2 Epistle, iii. 1—3. As God engraved with his own finger the decalogue on the tables of stone, and then commanded Moses to preserve them, that all men might read and know the will of their Maker, so the Holy Spirit engraved the principles of true piety in the hearts of the regenerated Corinthians, and then set them up to be studied, known, and acknowledged, as the moral workmanship of God. As the contents of an epistle discloses the mind of the writer, so scriptural uprightness reveals the heart of a Christian. On this principle the saving power of the Gospel in myriads of instances, has come under our observation. We do not now allude to conversions; but to the evidences of conversion. Nor do we admit transient amendments and

partial reformatiions as indubitable proofs of a new heart. We are perfectly aware that foolish virgins may walk in company with the wise, and content themselves with empty lamps. We do not forget that the good seed may vegetate in stony ground, and wither prematurely, because there is no depth of earth : or that it may spring up among thorns, be choked, and never ripen. But we recollect also, that the good ground produces "first the blade, then the ear, and finally, the full corn in the ear." And many a lovely field have we seen, and some we still see, studded with these precious plants of our Heavenly Father's planting. Their goodness is not like the deceitful blossom which never sets in fruit, but like the healthy grain, which gradually ripens to perfection. In our families—in our neighbourhoods—in our churches, what satisfactory evidences do we witness of the transforming efficacy of divine grace ; their heavenly conversation intimates, not obscurely, that they have been with Christ and learned of Him ; they have imbibed His Spirit, and they reflect His image. In health and in sickness, in adversity and in prosperity, in the shop and in the market, in the exchange and in the field, at home and abroad—they are the unwavering and consistent followers of their glorious Leader.

3. *The saving power of the gospel is further demonstrated by Individual Experience.* True religion consists of two things—first, an outward, visible form ; secondly, an inward spiritual power. Multitudes of nominal Christians content themselves with the form of godliness, which, being alone, is cold, dead, and ineffectual. Their religious rites and modes of worship may be decent, solemn, and imposing ; but, as they are unassociated with vital holiness, they are inert and idle ceremonies. The outward observances of religion are not more clearly taught

than experimental godliness. The same authority which commands us to search the Scriptures, to preach the gospel, to take heed how we hear it preached, to sing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord, to pray without ceasing, to frequent the communion-table,—assures us that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Personal religion includes feeling as well as faith and attention to external duties—a consciousness of the Divine approbation, as well as reliance on the mediation of Jesus Christ. “Being justified by faith,” says Paul, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The blessedness of the Christian is not unfrequently indescribable, and his capacity for heavenly enjoyment is full to overflowing. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Peter i. 8.) Nor, indeed, is this a privilege peculiar to the Christian dispensation. It was enjoyed and gratefully expressed by Old Testament saints. Hear the joyful experience of David: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” (Psalm xxiii. 5.) Listen to Isaiah: “And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” (Chapter xii. 1—3.) In these passages experience is blended with prophecy. Holy and inspired Simeon saw the day of Christ, and the ravishing prospect filled him with transports of delight. (John viii. 56).

Being elevated to this exalted state by the grace of God, we are both disposed and empowered to do that which, in our fallen condition, was utterly impracticable. Without Christ we could do nothing; we were both ruined and helpless.

“Plunged in a gulph of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheering gleam of hope,
Or spark of glimm’ring day.”

If we purposed to do good, evil was present with us. Carnal and sold under sin, how to perform that which is good we found not. But when the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made us free from the law of sin and death, we received power to fight with and to overcome our sensual and spiritual enemies. Now, from what source have we derived this moral strength? Not from man, but from God. Not from creeds, litanies, and Acts of Parliament; but from the living oracles of Jehovah. Not from baptism, episcopal confirmation, priestly absolution, and sacramental mysteries; but from the renewing and invigorating influence of the Holy Spirit. It was the glorious gospel of the blessed God, applied to our hearts by His own hand, which raised us from our prostrate condition, and nerved us with supernatural energy. And as the power of this Divine instrument is undiminished, and as the material on which it is operating is of the same essence with ourselves, what the gospel has done for us, it is doing, and will continue to do, for others. We know experimentally that it is “a hammer which breaks the hardest rock in pieces.” It is a fire which melts and refines the most adulterated metal. It is a magnet which attracts the most vagrant and erratic spirit of man. It is a crane which lifts the most bur-

dened and heavy laden sinner out of the horrible pit of guilt and condemnation. In short, we know that "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

4. *Divine appointments ensure success.* The instruments and agencies of man often fail to accomplish the purposes for which they are invented or selected. Ingenious men make discoveries and construct machines—some to work on land, some to ply in water, and others to act in air. They expend a vast amount of labour and large sums of money on their favourite enterprises; but their mechanical skill is finite; their knowledge of the forces which they desire to develope, apply, and control, is limited; and after having consumed their time, and their talents, and their fortunes on unsuccessful experiments, they are finally baffled, and discover, when it is too late, that the means which they employed are not adapted to secure the objects at which they aimed. Poverty, disappointment, and ridicule constitute the reward of their ill-contrived adventures. But God cannot miscalculate. "His understanding is infinite." He fully comprehends the essence of the object on which He purposes to operate. He knows what means are the best adapted to accomplish His benevolent designs, and His infinite wisdom and boundless goodness qualify and incline Him to select them. Consequently the instrumentalities which He hath appointed for the stability and increase of His kingdom amongst men cannot fail of success. "But when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed." This Divine arrangement has never been reversed. It still pleases God to effect the same merciful purpose by the same instrumentality. We have, therefore, full confidence in the efficiency of a preached gospel. Only let

the glad tidings of grace be proclaimed as they ought to be by properly accredited heralds, and success is certain : "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

5. *Other glorious proofs of the mighty energy of the Gospel are the multiplication, stability, and increasing strength of Christian Churches.*

There are in constant operation three powerful agents, which directly tend to prevent the organization of flourishing churches, and to thin the ranks of those which are already established—Death, Apostasy, and Persecution.

1. *The ravages of death.*—(1.) According to the most accurate calculations founded on official bills of mortality, the average life of mankind does not exceed thirty-two or thirty-three years. If many live twice, and a few three times, the length of this period, millions expire in infancy and childhood, and millions die in the bloom of youth. In churches which are organized, endowed, and ruled by civil Governments, infants are recognized as church members; but in voluntary churches, constituted by purely ecclesiastical authority, self-governed and self-sustained, young children are not included in their statistics.

(2.) The Primitive Methodist Church accounts none full and accredited members under fourteen years of age. The loss to the community by death is consequently far below the mortality of the entire population of the country. But were the rate of our denominational mortality, as published in the Conference Minutes for 1860, to stretch, on an average, over seventy-five years, and should no accessions of members be gained within the same period, it would annihilate the entire community. Not a solitary member out of the 132,114 would be left to bewail the extinction of the body. The same reasoning applies substantially to every other religious association. Cities,

countries, and empires, which are now adorned with Christian Churches, would relapse into a state of heathenism; and the wide world would become a moral wilderness, everywhere disfigured by sin, and cursed with misery. Iniquity would reign with undisputed sway, and desolation cover the face of the earth. But, despite the ravages of death, the Churches still live and prosper. If one tree is cut down, another is planted. If one Christian dies, another is born from above. The word of God is circulated, the Gospel is preached, sinners flock to hear. They believe the message, repent of their sins, trust in Christ, and are saved. One planteth, another watereth, and God giveth the increase.

(3.) The foundation of the Primitive Methodist denomination was laid at Standley, in the Moorlands of Staffordshire, in 1810, and consisted of ten members only, all of whom moved in humble spheres of life. Their course was not divisive and violent, but peaceful and catholic. From that day to the present, the Connexion has never manifested a design, or cherished a wish, to acquire numerical strength and importance at the expense of other Churches' disorganization and ruin. And in no period of the Community's history has she been strengthened by large accessions from other denominations. But her labours have been crowned with multitudes of converts from the unregenerate ranks of mankind. This is the broad seal of God, which He has affixed to His own institution—the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. The victims of death have been many, but the vacancies created by their removal have been filled up, and large reinforcements have been marshalled from year to year beneath the standard of the cross.

(4.) Similar remarks are applicable to kindred Churches.

Without Government aid, and in defiance of numerous hostile elements, they still live, and acquire increasing influence and numerical success with the lapse of years. The extraordinary success which has crowned the missionary enterprises of the Moravians is truly astonishing. "They are said to have at this day 1,500 missionaries, and 180,000 reclaimed heathens in communion with them."

(5.) We are inclined to believe that the subject under consideration is rarely reviewed with that profound attention and impartiality to which it is entitled. On one hand, a Church suffers a numerical declension, and if the number of deaths is equal to the number lost, those "who are at ease in Zion" are perfectly satisfied, and seem to think that every other person ought to be the same. On the other hand, the ranks of a Church have been weakened by death, but in the same proportion strengthened by new accessions. But because the Church remains stationary, croakers and fault-finders exclaim, "Nothing is done. At this rate the world will never be converted." The latter of these sentences is true. A stationary Church will never convert the world. The former sentence is false. Something is done. The fact that many of our companions have been removed to the Church triumphant, and yet the Church militant still preserves her number undiminished demonstrates that the Church is "neither barren nor unfruitful." If the heavenly family is not increasing it exhibits no signs of decay. But as the saving blessings of the Gospel are intended for "all the world and every creature," the rapid progress of Christianity in all its transforming power, ought to be an object of our ardent desire. With nothing less should we be satisfied.

2. *Apostasy.* (1.) The Christian has voluntarily en-

tered into covenant with God, and no amount of suffering on one hand, or temporal advantages on the other, should prevail on him to violate his pledge. It is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord, even under the most extenuating circumstances. How aggravated then must be the guilt of that man, who, after having been enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and having tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, falls away from this holy and blessed estate. And as the sin of apostasy is more heinous in its nature than is that of ordinary impenitence, the punishment of the backslider will be more dreadful than that of the common transgressor. If "he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord." In the light of these inspired truths, how forcible and awful is the reasoning of the Apostle Peter on this momentous subject:—"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."—2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.

(2.) Notwithstanding these Divine and fearful declarations, to what myriads is the following proverb applicable :

—“The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” How truly may it be said, with reference to our own times, “The love of many waxes cold;” “their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” Every Christian community, however wisely constituted and governed, is more or less dishonoured and afflicted by unstable souls, who “forsake the Fountain of living water, and hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.” Nor can we contemplate their folly and wretchedness, their guilt and perils, without emotions of mingled indignation and sorrow. Over their fallen spirits we feel constrained to pour forth our lamentations. How is the fine gold become dim; their crowns are fallen from their heads; their horns are defiled in the dust. Once they walked in the light of God’s countenance, and in his righteousness they were exalted; now the light which was in them is become darkness, and how great that darkness is! Once enriched with the fruits of the Spirit, they reflected the grace of God which reigned triumphant in their hearts, and shed a gracious influence all around them—now they are like a tree twice dead and plucked up by the roots.

(3.) Whether men will it so or not, the influence of example is powerful for good or for evil. It is peculiarly so with respect to a professor of religion: the very nature of his profession is a tacit declaration that the sovereign homage which he renders to the Supreme Being, is not the practical result of time-serving principles; but the spontaneous fruit of religious conviction. His Christianity is ostensibly based—not on fashion, nor on worldly cunning, nor on slavish dread, but on the dictates of his conscience. And as God is unchangeable, and that which is morally

correct now will always be so, mankind have a right to expect that the professing Christian will perseveringly support his avowed principles by a circumspect deportment. For the uniform and abiding integrity of a carnal man, whatever good qualities he may possess, we have no guarantee; being under the dominion of sin, his constitutional or philosophical virtue may fail him any moment. As he resists the drawings of the Holy Spirit, and the controlling influence of Divine love, he is liable to be drawn from his wonted orbit by the first powerful and malignant attraction with which he comes in contact. If he falls into gross sin we are not astonished, nor do his worldly companions point at him the finger of scorn, and taunt him with inconsistency. He makes no profession of religion; for this reason they are disposed to make liberal allowance for any immoral act in which he may be overtaken. But if a person professes to be a man of God, mankind are warranted to expect that he will live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. And if he falls into open sin, or renounces his fellowship with the Church of Christ, he at once lays himself open to the charge of apostasy, and gives the adversary occasion to speak reproachfully of that worthy Name by which he is called: hence, impenitent sinners are hardened in their crimes by witnessing the unstable walk of religious professors. Nor will the wicked fail to boast, that they are able to conduct themselves with as much propriety without religion as the disciples of Christ are with religion. Of course the boast is both false and vain; but those who make it either cannot or will not see it to be a "refuge of lies."

Another disastrous consequence of apostasy is, it is a stumbling-block to those who are sincerely asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards. When an

awakened sinner is entering the kingdom of heaven, and meets a backslider returning to the world, it not unfrequently gives him a fatal repulse. He makes a sudden pause—he contemplates the apostate with amazement. He stumbles at the threshold of the kingdom, and proceeds no farther. He is powerfully tempted to believe, that the teaching of the Holy Spirit is a delusive, visionary light, and that the operations of grace on his own heart are the fermentations of a wild and heated imagination. Thus, while the circumspect Christian by letting his light shine allures others to glorify his Father which is in heaven, the apostate by his moral perversity turns the lame out of the way, and causes them to stumble at the law.

4. And what church has not been thus wounded in the house of her friends? or what single society has not been dishonoured, weakened, grieved, and put to shame by the conduct of her unstable members? From Judas, the traitor, and Peter, the profane coward; down to this present hour, every section of Christendom has been made to sigh and bleed by the numerous and painful defections of her own people. Over these melancholy domestic afflictions many a father and mother in Israel have been constrained to give vent to their sorrow in the mournful language of the weeping prophet: "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

But Zion, although cast down, is not destroyed. If she

has been forsaken by many of her own children, the heralds of consolation have cheered the faithful, revived their drooping courage, and led them on to battle and to victory. In thousands of instances, where one Christian has returned to the beggarly elements of this world, five or ten worldings have received the message of salvation, and pressed into the kingdom of God. At the same time the vigilance and activity of stable believers have been quickened and improved by witnessing the downfall of their unwary and supine companions. Thus God makes the wrath of devils to praise Him, and the cruel stratagems of hell to subserve the gracious purposes of heaven.

3. *Persecution.*—Persecution for righteousness sake, is a development of some of the most malignant principles of which human nature is susceptible. Were not the existence of these diabolical principles clearly manifested, it would be difficult to conceive how they could have a being, and how they could display themselves among the creatures of a benevolent God, and among members of the same intelligent family. But who doubts the existence of persecution? or what Christian, who has long avowed himself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, has not experienced its direful reality? In its mode of operation, persecution does not confine itself to one stereotyped form. It is flexible as a Jesuit, and regulates its movements according to circumstances. Its ways, like those of a strange woman, “are moveable,” or diversified. In the debased drunkard, it is coarse, vociferous, and foolhardy. In the debauchee, it is rancorous, obscene, and splenetic. In a smockfrock or fustian jacket, it is rough and stormy as the raging sea. In Oxford grey or flowing lawn, it operates in disguise, and relies on

sapping, mining, and arrogant assumptions; or it puts on an air of sanctimonious dignity, and employs threats, constables, police officers, and auctioneers. In imperial robes it enacts laws, inflicts penalties, imprisonments, confiscations of goods, and death. In the Inquisition, it has recourse to noxious dungeons, hunger, thirst, racks, melted lead, redhot pincers, and devouring fire. In the ordinary habits of society, it throws the javelins of ridicule, contempt, and defamation. Its invention is continually on the rack, devising new methods of annoyance and torture for the innocent victims of its demoniacal passion. The peaceful followers of Christ have been, and still are, persecuted, afflicted, and tormented by different classes of opponents; namely, Jews, Pagans, Mohammedans, and nominal Christians.

(1.) *First by Jews.*—The great body of the Jews are still blinded by infidelity, and hardened in crime. They still reject Christ, and obstinately exclaim, “Away with Him; His blood be on us and our children. We will not have Him to reign over us.” They still regard Christianity with deep-rooted aversion, and treat Christians with rancorous contempt. As in the days of Christ, so now, those who possess influence and authority, will neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves nor quietly suffer them to enter that would: parents, especially, employ the most rigorous means to rivet Judaism on the minds of their children, and to prejudice them against Christianity. And if any of them conscientiously leave their father and mother to follow Christ, they are not unfrequently persecuted with banishment from the parental roof. In this country, where perhaps they enjoy a greater measure of civil liberty than that which falls to their lot under any other Government, they pay but little respect to our na-

tional religious feelings and usages. According to the Religious Census of 1851, the Jews had then fifty-three synagogues, with accommodation for 8,438 worshippers; there are, probably, 30,000 of these avowed adversaries of the gospel residing in the metropolis. Many of them are eagerly engaged in commercial pursuits; some of them, out of regard to Christian usage, or for other reasons which are best known to themselves, close their shops and warehouses on the Lord's day; but many of them ply their respective trades with as much exposure and assiduity on the Christian Sabbath, as they do on any other day of the week. Such an example from such a people, counteracts, to a serious extent, the operations of the gospel. The Jews, be it remembered, are neither Atheists nor Deists. They admit that God spake to Moses and the Prophets: they are firm believers in the authenticity and inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures: to them were first committed the Oracles of God. In the face of these facts, their open and inveterate hostility to the gospel tells ponderously in the scale of Antichrist. But as the doctrines of the Cross are of God, no created force can overthrow them. The Jewish priest may denounce the Christian herald as a blasphemer, but in defiance of his anathemas, remission of sins is still preached in the name of the despised Nazarene, and His disciples are multiplied daily.

(2.) *Second, by Pagans.*—Rarely, if ever, has the gospel a free course among the heathen. Among the American Indians, the various tribes of Africa, in the densely populated provinces of India, in the vast empire of China, among the numerous islands which stud the bosom of the wide Pacific Ocean, Christian missionaries have had to encounter formidable difficulties and perils, arising from the

hostile feelings of the savage and superstitious inhabitants. And many of these ambassadors of peace have been betrayed, plundered, and murdered by the treacherous and ferocious objects of their compassion. The massacre of Williams and Harris at Erromango, Nov. 20, 1839, and the still more recent expulsion of the missionaries from Madagascar, and the cruel martyrdom of a great number of native Christians, on account of their firm adherence to the faith of Christ, are proofs of this assertion. But if the truth occasionally experiences a transient check in her heavenly march, she girds on her divine armour afresh, returns to the conflict, and ultimately succeeds in "pulling down the strongholds (of heathenism) and casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

(3.) *Third, by Mohammedans.* The Turks, in harmony with their unsocial and inhuman creed, have long been proverbial for their cruelty towards Christians. Their national cognomen is commonly employed by us as a conventional sign of barbarity. If we say, in reference to the character of one of our own countrymen, "he is a Turk," we are understood to mean that he is cruel. Mahomet, the founder of this powerful and widely spread imposture, measured his intolerance and barbarity by the extent of his power. His blasphemous tenets he propagated with the sword. The principal missionaries which he employed for the purpose of increasing the number of his disciples, were blood-thirsty warriors. In his attempts at proselytism the terms which he proposed were submission or death. A kindred spirit of fanaticism and cruelty has successively inspired his followers. The correctness of this statement has been often painfully realized.

by travellers, merchants, mariners, and soldiers, who have had the misfortune to fall into the hands of these deluded wretches.

In Turkey, till very recently, if any disciple of Mahomet embraced Christianity, it was regarded by the laws as a capital offence, and punished with death. Only a few years ago, at the very time that Christian England and France were sending an armed force to succour Turkey against the rapacious invasions of Russia, a subject of the Porte was beheaded at Adrianople for no other offence than renouncing Mohammedanism and embracing Christianity. Such laws long presented a frowning and sanguinary, though not an insuperable barrier, to the aggressions of evangelical truth. Before Zerubbabel the mountain shall become a plain, and Dagon shall fall before the ark of God. The crescent shall bow to the cross.

(4.) *By nominal Christians.* If all who consider themselves within the pale of Christendom were true to their profession, cordially united, and strove together for the faith of the gospel, what a weight of beneficial influence would they exert on their unsaved fellow-men! Their noble efforts, supported by a consistent example, would contribute powerfully to the conversion of the world. But alas! how often are sincere followers of Christ misrepresented, oppressed, and persecuted by those who proclaim themselves to be the duly authorized ministers of the Christian Church. How often are the devoted ambassadors of God rudely assailed by baptized ruffians. That the doctrines of the New Testament really progress and gain converts by peaceful efforts, despite of all these hostile elements which are in constant and vigorous operation, is a subject of astonishment and admiration. How shall we account for this extraordinary fact? On natural

principles it is inexplicable. A reformation so pure, so spiritual, so comprehensive, and successfully accomplished by mere human agency, was never witnessed since the world began. Connect this gracious and stupendous work and its glorious results with supernatural influence, then the difficulty of accounting for it vanishes at once. It is the work of God, and it is worthy of His great and glorious name.



PRIMITIVE METHODIST JUBILEE CHAPEL, ABERDEEN WALK, SCARBOROUGH.

CHAPTER XII.

IT IS THE DUTY OF MANKIND TO ASSEMBLE AT STATED PERIODS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL PREACHED.

The Divine appointment of some men to preach the Gospel implies the duty of other men to hear the Gospel preached. 1. The law of Moses required the Hebrews to congregate for public worship. 2. Jesus Christ gave to public worship the weight of his sanction and example. 3. After our Lord's ascension, the Apostles and successive ministers continued to assemble the people together to hear the Gospel preached. 4. Every intelligent creature ought to render visible homage to his Creator. 5. If public worship is a Divine institution, its necessity cannot reasonably be denied. Neglect of this duty traceable, (1) To infidelity. (2) Pride. (3) Indolence.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
Romans x. 17.

A KNOWLEDGE of clearly defined obligations under which God hath placed a certain class of men to preach the Gospel, necessarily implies, that another class of men are placed under correlative obligations by the same authority. If necessity is laid on the minister of the Gospel to defend, to expound, and to enforce the word of God, it is no less the duty of mankind in general to hear the word of God defended, expounded, and enforced. If the ambassadors of Christ are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature, by implication, every creature who is privileged with the opportunity, is commanded to hear the Gospel preached.

1. *Under the old dispensation the law of Moses positively required the Hebrews to congregate for the purpose of religious worship, and commanded them to instruct their*

children to observe this ordinance throughout all their families from generation to generation. To this appointment the servants of God faithfully and scrupulously attended. The tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness, the temple which Solomon built at Jerusalem, the synagogues and oratories which the Jews provided, both in Palestine and the adjacent countries where they sojourned, were all intended for so many centres of social worship. The pattern of the temple was given by the deity Himself, and when it was solemnly dedicated to Him, He graciously condescended to honour it with the symbol of His peculiar presence, to the joy of the whole nation. In that august sanctuary Jehovah took up his earthly residence, and the priests in their courses stood before Him day and night, to minister in holy things. There the people assembled to offer Him sacrifices, prayer, and thanksgiving. There God recorded His name, and around His sacred footstool the tribes of Israel thronged, to acknowledge Him for their God, and to receive His heavenly benedictions.

2. *Our blessed Lord, although He needed not, as sinful men do, the means of reconciliation to God, yet as a holy Person, in "fulfilling all righteousness," He gave to public worship the sanction of His teaching and the weight of His example.* The last two or three years of His spotless life were employed in itinerating from place to place, and instructing vast multitudes in the things which belonged to their eternal peace. Nor did He confine His public instructions to consecrated places. Wherever a congregation assembled and were inclined to listen, He opened His mouth and taught the people. In addition to His personal example and ministry, He ordained twelve apostles, and sent them forth with a command to "Go into all the

world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither He himself would come." And He said unto them, "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Luke x. 1—16. That the doctrine of congregational worship is taught inferentially in these appointments, no sensible person can doubt. To encourage this branch of Divine worship our Lord says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. This assurance was certainly intended to encourage social worship.

3. *After our Saviour's ascension into heaven, His followers continued with remarkable zeal and success to conduct public worship.* On the day of Pentecost, the apostles preached the gospel at Jerusalem with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Nor was this great accession to the Church of transient endurance. The new converts "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." This was a signal proof that the proceedings of the apostles had the Divine approval. The course which they commenced at the feast of Pentecost, they carried out on a magnificent scale in Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and many heathen nations, both near to, and remote from, the original scene of their sacred operations; and with results similar to those which crowned their first labours. Within thirty years of our Saviour's crucifixion, Christian Churches were planted throughout a wide extent of territory. It was the standing practice of those

Churches to conduct the worship of God publicly, wherever they were permitted to do so. And even when this privilege was denied to them by persecuting governments, they frequently assembled for public devotion, at the risk of forfeiting their liberty and lives. "Not one example," says Archbishop Potter, "of any Christian Church can be produced, through the whole world, where the sacraments were not administered, the gospel preached, and the worship of God celebrated in an open and public manner. Even in the sharpest persecutions, the Christian assemblies, though it may not be so openly as in times of peace, were constantly held and frequented; and whoever did not choose to endure the most cruel death, rather than preserve his life by absenting himself, was thought unworthy to be called a Christian." How grateful would the primitive Asiatic Christians and the early Reformers have been for the religious liberty which we enjoy; and how highly culpable shall we be if we treat this inestimable blessing with indifference.

4. *Every intelligent creature ought to render visible homage to his Creator.* Amongst men the glory of God is, of course, more conspicuously promoted by His being publicly worshipped than by private devotion. Closet devotion is concealed from human observation, and known only to God and ourselves; but sincere and heart-felt piety, manifested by religious exercises before men, is calculated to impress thoughtful observers and fellow-worshippers—not only with a secret reverence for the Divine Being, but also with the propriety of rendering Him supreme homage in a manner which is most accordant with His own requirements. It is impossible to let our light shine before men so advantageously apart from public worship as we can in connection with it. If a man

seldom or never frequents the house of God, he may possibly maintain strict morality in his intercourse with society; but his practical contempt for the sanctuary exposes his amiable exterior to suspicion. His conduct, simply as a man with men in this present world, is entitled to our respect; but it is difficult to avoid suspecting that his mind is tainted with infidelity. If his morality is not based on education or moral philosophy, apart from Christianity, it is not easy to conceive how he can, with anything approaching self-satisfaction, habitually absent himself from the gates of Zion. Were his heart right with God, one would think a grateful and zealous concern for His honour would draw him out of his privacy, and prompt him with humble boldness to confess Christ in the assemblies of the saints.

The services of the sanctuary have a direct tendency to remind mankind of what they ought ever to remember, but which they are prone to forget, namely, the various obligations of religion. "Were men only to repair to their devotion, as the disciple of quality did to his Lord and Master, secretly and by night for fear of the Jews, religion, thus lowly and unbefriended, would soon decay for want of public countenance and encouragement. For what would be the consequence, if religion sought the shades, and lived a recluse entirely immured in closets, while irreligion audaciously appears abroad, like 'the pestilence that destroyeth at noonday?'" It requires no great depth of penetration to perceive, nor expense of argument to prove, that the want of public religion, . . . or a general inattention thereto, would end in a general irreverence for the Deity, in a universal dissolution of morals, and all the overflowings of ungodliness. The service of the sanctuary, the word of God which is there

statedly read, expounded, and enforced, from time to time, awakens those pious reflections which wicked men are anxious to lay fast asleep. But when public and repeated calls to a holy life are neglected, men become gradually and increasingly estranged from God and goodness, till at length they not unfrequently settle down in a confirmed and an avowed contempt for the Bible. God is the Sovereign of the universe; the only independent Potentate; the King eternal, immortal, invisible; and whoever wishes to honour Him must express his desire by the most appropriate actions. He must exemplify to others his reverence for the Deity, by frequenting public assemblies which are set apart for this purpose.

5. *If it be allowed that public worship is a Divine institution, its necessity cannot reasonably be denied.* God is not a hard Master. He does not capriciously lay upon us any unnecessary burden. But as vast numbers who bear the Christian name live in the constant neglect of the public ordinances of religion, it may be useful to inquire into the causes of their criminal negligence. If we mistake not, impartial inquiry will lead us to the conclusion that the sin which is now under consideration is traceable, not to one cause only, but to many and widely different causes. Of these causes we think the following are the principal:—Infidelity, pride, indolence, and ignorance.

(1.) *Infidelity.* The infidel professes to believe either that “there is no God,” and therefore no religion, or that the Holy Scriptures are forgeries, and consequently that God does not require to be worshipped according to their instructions. The Bible in his estimation is a compilation of fables, fabricated by designing impostors, or dreaming fanatics. As for the preaching of the Gospel, it is priest-craft, and a cunning method of securing an easy life and a

comfortable maintenance at the expense of a credulous public. Professing these sentiments, we are not surprised that he seldom or never appears in the temple of God. For a man of his character assemblies of a different kind possess more powerful attractions than the house of prayer. His favourite resorts are the grovelling beer-house, the fiery dram-shop, the wanton theatre, the light-reading room, or the refined philosophical hall. In these admired haunts he meets with entertainments which harmonize with the corrupt emotions of his heart, or the defective character of his education. In these tents of wickedness, or seminaries of mere secular instruction, he can hear the name of God blasphemed, His Sabbaths derided, His word turned into a jest-book, His worship ridiculed, and His people laughed to scorn. These viands furnish to his depraved appetite a sumptuous table. With such an appetite so indulged, he has no relish for the spiritual and wholesome provisions which the house of God affords.

But we would rather witness his faith and salvation, than his obstinate unbelief and eternal condemnation. Lingerings carelessly around the crater of the bottomless pit, his situation is most alarming; but the grace of God, through a crucified Mediator, is sufficient to "pluck him as a brand from the burning."

(2). *Pride keeps another from the house of God.* Ask him to assign his reasons for absenting himself habitually from the sanctuary of God. Hearken to his scornful reply, "It is superfluous for me to frequent a place of public worship, even where the officiating minister is talented and popular, for I could hear nothing from him but what I know already, or can learn more completely from my own library. As for that place of worship, it is contemptible. And the people who congregate there to per-

form their devotions—who or what are they? They are the offscouring of all things—the lowest grade of society. ‘Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.’” In many cases a strata of infidelity underlies the proud man’s nominal Christianity. If he really believed the Holy Scriptures to be the inspired oracles of God, and if he comprehended the nature and extent of their requirements but very imperfectly, how could he, with the least show of consistency, treat the public ordinances of religion with deliberate neglect? The plea of superior wisdom, as a reason for such conduct, is utterly fallacious, and disreputable alike to his head and to his heart. Solid learning, associated with sterling piety, never puffs up its possessor with self-sufficiency. Moses, David, Solomon, Paul, were great men intellectually. Did their superior knowledge inspire them with contempt or indifference for the sanctuary? Did they disdain to commingle with those who were vastly beneath them in learned attainments? No; they were good men as well as gifted men. They consequently “loved the habitation of God’s house, and the place where His honour dwelleth.” Men of the same character, of all countries, and in all generations, have invariably copied their godly example. Minds of a superior standard, clothed with humility as with a garment, are ever among the first to manifest their reverence for God, by appearing in the stated assemblies of the saints. And we would rather see the proud man at the gates of Zion, than witness his absence. The grace of God may bring down his high looks, and dispose him to prefer the office of a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, to the president’s chair in the tent of wickedness.

(3.) *Indolence keeps others from public worship.* But as a cloak for their supineness, they have carefully provided

themselves with vain excuses, and advance them confidently on every occasion. Inquire of these slothful professors, why they are so seldom seen in the congregations of the faithful. Instead of stating the truth candidly—instead of saying, “We are like the Sardians, ‘we have a name to live; but we are dead’” or “We are like the Laodiceans, ‘lukewarm, neither cold nor hot;’” they begin to apologize, to prevaricate, and perhaps deliberately to lie. Thus, instead of diligently and piously availing themselves of every ordinance of grace, they waste their time and talents in vainly attempting to vindicate a course of life which is manifestly and decidedly wrong.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MANNER IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO CONDUCT OURSELVES WHEN WE ASSEMBLE PUBLICLY TO WORSHIP ALMIGHTY GOD.

Many respectable hearers are dark and comfortless on their death beds.

1. Among those who offer, in the house of God, the sacrifice of fools we may reckon—(1) The formalist. (2) The hypocrite. (3) The self-righteous. (4.) The seeker of entertainment. 2. To prepare for a profitable hearing of the word of God. (1) Examine yourself. (2) On your way to the house of God, guard your heart and tongue. (3) When you arrive at the sanctuary, at once reverently take your seat. Loitering about the entrance of God's house is offensive to orderly people, and a dishonour to God Himself. (4) Punctually be at the house of God at the appointed time. (5) In the house of God be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Hear the preacher as an ambassador for God. Hear attentively. Hear discriminatingly. Hear with a fervent desire to receive good. Hear thankfully. Hear for yourself. Hear believingly. 3. Retire from the house of God in a reverential manner. (1) Do not hurriedly prepare for retiring from the sanctuary. (2) Prayerfully reflect on what you have heard. (3) Reduce the truth that you hear to practice.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil."—ECCLES. v. 1.

To my own mind it has often been a subject of painful reflection, that so many steady and respectable persons, who have sat with marked regularity under a faithful Gospel ministry many years, are so dark and comfortless on a bed of death. This melancholy fact, which creates so many fearful apprehensions both to the dying and their sympathising attendants, is a continual source of grief to every thoughtful Christian. In our conversations with serious people on this mournful subject, we frequently hear

them express their sorrow and astonishment. At these expressions we are not surprised. How lamentable it is that persons should stately attend the house of God for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, and thus enjoy the most favourable opportunity of becoming wise unto salvation, and yet tremble as they approach the valley of death. In the devotions of such persons there has been an essential defect, or their last hours would not be shrouded in so much darkness and terror.

Such hearers would do well to ponder the motto that stands at the head of this chapter, which by some commentators is translated thus:—"Guard thy steps as thou art going to the house of God; and approach to hearken, and not to give the sacrifice of fools, for none of them have knowledge about doing evil." By "fools" we understand superstitious, irreverent, and unreflecting persons. Of old time the Jew, whose heart was imbued with intelligent piety, "praised the Lord with a song, and magnified Him with thanksgiving," because he knew that this mode of worship "pleased the Lord better than an ox which hath horns and hoofs." But foolish worshippers stupidly offered gifts for the atonement of their sins, and neglected to cultivate contrition of spirit. Their formal and ignorant posterity approve of their doings.

It may be useful to furnish brief notices of some of the leading sections of that numerous class, who come to the house of God to "offer the sacrifice of fools."

(1.) *The formalist.*—Although his heart is not right with God, his outward deportment is grave and punctilious. Decently attired, and furnished with his "Church Service" or "Denominational Hymn-book," he walks sedately to "the gate of heaven." On his arrival, he does not saunter about the court or vestibule of the sanctuary,

block up the approaches, and thereby annoy every succeeding comer. He enters at once the sacred edifice, takes his seat in an orderly manner, and prepares with becoming seriousness to take part in the appointed service. During the ministrations of the preacher his attention is fixed, and his behaviour becomes the sanctity of the place and the solemnity of the occasion. He draws near to God with his mouth, and honours Him with his lips. Thus far he goes, but no farther. Having attended divine service, he flatters himself that he has done his duty, although he has merely used the means of grace, instead of employing them instrumentally as channels through which God communicates blessings to His faithful worshippers.

(2.) *The hypocrite.*—Religious hypocrisy consists in deliberately counterfeiting, and personating the true Christian. It is a dramatic performance, with piety for its subject and deception for its design. In depicting the odious character of hypocrites, our Lord employs language which is expressive of the severest reprehension. He designates them whited walls, painted sepulchres, concealed graves, a brood of vipers, and wolves in sheep's clothing. Such are the withering expressions used by the searcher of hearts, to portray hypocrites in their genuine colours. The motives which induce wicked men to put on a mask of religion are various. But whatever secondary consideration may prompt his nefarious conduct, fraud is his chosen instrumentality, and self-interest is the object of his aim. He calculates that a profession of piety decently supported, will hush suspicion, put people off their guard, and secure the confidence of those whom he intends to deceive. He wishes to lay in a stock of provisions, or clothing, or furniture, at other people's expense. Or he covets the liberal patronage of the Church. Or he is

ambitious for a post of honour and trust, that he may wield respectable influence, and be entrusted with the key of other men's coffers. He lays his plans accordingly. His first decision is to disguise himself in a borrowed character superior to his own. He next studies how he may most effectually accomplish his purpose. With these dark thoughts revolving in his mind, he watches the external movements of those persons who enjoy the highest reputation for moral worth. Then he endeavours assiduously to imitate them. Sometimes his mimicry is managed so adroitly, that his real character is concealed.

“Nor men, nor angels can discern it:

It walks invisible, except to God alone.”

At other times his imitative powers fail him, and clearly betray the absence of sincerity. His artificial sanctity is strained and awkward, and the bungling impostor is detected through his flimsy disguise; of such a man the world ought to be ashamed. It is disgraceful to decoy unwary ships by hoisting false colours or signals of distress. But what is very remarkable, when the hypocrite is unmasked, his fellow-citizens of the world, instead of branding him with infamy for his deceitful conduct, and sympathising with the men whom he has defrauded, they fiercely turn round on the Church, and charge his crimes on the unimpeachable followers of Christ. This is one of the most flagrant acts of injustice of which people can be guilty. No entire body of men ought to be condemned for the misconduct of an individual. What reasonable man would reproach an entire banking company or friendly society, because one of the officials had absconded with the funds of the institution? But if in cases of hypocrisy, one community is more blameable than another, it is not the Church on which the impostor has practised

deceit, but the social body to which the impostor really belongs—that is the world.

Among misers and the poor, the objects of hypocrisy are loaves and fishes.

A few years ago, I heard Dr. Massie state in a public lecture which he delivered in London, that an Irish Roman Catholic waited on a Protestant minister, and signified to him that she thought of changing her religion. “Well,” said the minister, “what religion do you think of embracing, if you renounce Popery?” “The Protestant religion.” “Well, and what then?” inquired the minister. “I was thinking what I should receive for turning Protestant.” To elicit the extent of her calculations, the minister inquired, “What should you expect to receive?” The Romanist answered, “About three shillings a week.” Many we fear are equally sordid, though not equally candid, in revealing the secret motives by which their religious forms and professors are regulated.

(3.) *The Self-righteous*.—Perhaps he has had the misfortune to receive a pharisaical education : he therefore looks on the service of the sanctuary as meritorious, and as entitling him to heaven. The character of his religious training induces him to believe that God will never shut those persons out of Paradise who statedly frequent His temple on earth. The Bible teaches him in the plainest manner that salvation is not of works lest any man should boast ; and that if heaven be obtained, it will not be the payment of a debt, but the bestowment of a favour. But he either neglects to search the Scriptures, or he does not understand them. He attaches more importance to the erroneous instructions of men, than to the clear and definite teaching of God’s word. A very superficial acquaintance with the New Testament would convince him, that were

he to do all that he is commanded to do he would still be an unprofitable servant. But the Bible is not his directory. Instead of regarding himself as a hell-deserving sinner, he contemplates his genuine character in a false light—he recounts his good deeds—magnifies their importance—affixes a price to each of them—calculates their aggregate value, and flatters himself that he has accumulated a stock of merit sufficient to entitle him to an inheritance in heaven. The secret language of his heart is, “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men. They are sinful, and deserve to be consigned to hell, but I am holier than they, and anticipate Paradise as a reward.” Like the Laodiceans, he flatters himself that he is rich and increased with goods, and needs nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” His boasted righteousness “is filthy rags.”

(4.) *The seeker of entertainment.*—To spend the whole of the Sabbath day at home would be tedious and gloomy. To devote it entirely to recreation would be fatiguing. And as he is fond of being in a crowd where he may see and be seen—show himself, and review^e other persons’ paraded exhibitions, he occasionally makes his appearance in the house of God. But the idea of *worship* never enters his mind. Sometimes he is ten or twenty minutes too late, perhaps intentionally, that he may attract special notice. He marches along the aisles with an air of levity which ill accords with the sacredness of the place. Instead of “keeping his foot,” and reflecting soberly that “the place whereon he treads is holy ground,” one would think he had committed a mistake, and imagined he were pacing the floor of a theatre. He takes his seat in a tumultuous manner. He annoys the preacher, and diverts the atten-

tion of those who witness his irreverent behaviour, by frequently changing his posture, reading books, glancing in all directions to catch anything which he can turn to a moment's amusement, adjusting his dress, and indecently preparing for his departure before the minister has pronounced the concluding benediction.

He regards the house of God as a place of entertainment, and the conductors of Divine worship as a band of performers. He would prefer the theatre to the sanctuary were it not that the admission fees are too expensive for him, or perhaps he cannot reconcile his conscience to the questionable amusements of the playhouse. He thinks, and thinks correctly, that he could not frequent that tent of wickedness without tarnishing his reputation. Consequently, from motives of worldly interest and self-respect, he passes by the theatrical gates of hell, and enters the sacred portals of Zion. Perhaps he has a taste for music, whether vocal or instrumental, and he admires a good sermon delivered by an eloquent preacher. He is frequently gratified without being in the least degree benefited. The pardon of his sins and the renovation of his soul, as reasons for attending public worship, never engage his thoughts; or if they occasionally arrest his attention, he instantly repels them as unwelcome intruders. Such a hearer may admire a talented preacher and invite him to share the hospitalities of his table; but if his only aim in going to the house of God is to seek entertainment, every time he enters that "dreadful place" he "offers the sacrifice of fools." It appears that amongst those who listened to the prophet Ezekiel there were hearers of this description. For thus saith the Lord, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for

with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words but they do them not." Chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. Never perhaps were there a greater number of persons in this country infected with "itching ears" than there are at the present day. Multitudes of church-goers and chapel-goers attach extravagant importance to beautiful sanctuaries, scientific music, fine voices, elaborate sermons, grammatical accuracy, correct pronunciation, and graceful attitude; but the joyful and saving tidings of the gospel delivered in a plain style, and the songs of Zion sung in unlearned notes, awaken in their carnal hearts no heavenly emotions. Sound is preferred to sense, and appearance to reality.

2. Having considered the improper motives by which many are induced to attend public worship, and the unbecoming manner in which they conduct themselves during Divine service, we may now notice a few particulars, the observance of which is necessary to the hearers' edification. If you would worship God acceptably,

(1.) *Examine yourself.* Inquire searchingly and impartially into your spiritual state. If you do not know what you need, you will be at a loss to know for what to ask. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

(2.) *On your way to the sanctuary, let your mind and tongue be suitably employed.* Thoughts and conversations, which are convenient for some occasions, are not expedient for all occasions. The less your mind is encumbered with worldly cares when you are approaching the sanctuary the better. At such a time our meditations should be collected, and flow in a well regulated current towards the object of

our devotions. At the throne of grace distraction, like intervening clouds, obscures the light and diminishes the genial influence of the Sun of Righteousness. But unobstructed access, intelligent and concentrated devotion place us directly beneath His enlightening and invigorating beams. If you meet with company on your way to the house of God, suffer not vain thoughts and worldly conversation to beguile you astray. Keep your heart with all diligence, and your lips as with a bridle. On the Lord's-day, especially, let not the topics of your discourse be commerce, markets, politics, or any other ordinary subject of every-day life. As you "walk to the house of God in company, take sweet counsel together." Let the meditations of your heart, and the words of your mouth be acceptable to the Lord, who is your strength and your Redeemer.

(3.) *On your arrival at the house of God, enter at once, and reverently take your seat.* Do not loiter about the court or doors of the sanctuary. The evils connected with this widely-prevalent but unseemly habit, are manifold and great. Groups of idle spectators and chatting parties, obstructing the entrance to the sanctuary, operate as a serious discouragement to different classes of people. Persons of cultivated manners feel a special aversion to the repulsive habits against which our censures are directed. Modest and retiring females feel painfully tried when they have to press through a crowd of triflers before they can gain access to the temple of God. By these imprudences a place of worship, and an entire congregation, may be brought into disrepute. These are circumstances which have probably never entered into the minds of many who are guilty of the vulgar and injurious practices which we condemn. A moment's sober reflection, however, will con-

vince them that our remarks are but too well founded. And whatever be the feelings of other ministers, I never have to perform the unwelcome task of passing through a crowd of loiterers in the hallowed precincts of the sanctuary without experiencing emotions of a very unpleasant description.

The conduct which we deplore is highly disrespectful towards God. He hath commanded us to "reverence his sanctuary" (Lev. xix. 30). But to linger about its portals makes it look more like an exchange than a house of prayer. The place where Jehovah's name is recorded "is holy ground;" and whenever we approach a spot which is thus consecrated by His peculiar and gracious presence, our minds should be impressed with religious awe. But the man who stands laughing and talking, or curiously observing every occurrence that passes, or vulgarly gazing at every comer, or stupidly blocking up the avenue to the sanctuary, affords mournful indications that "God is not in all his thoughts." It is much to be deplored that not a few pious people allow themselves to be drawn unwarily into the unseemly custom against which our animadversions are directed. Their example exerts a baneful influence on many others. Multitudes are governed more by example and custom than by revelation and reason. In enlightened and sober reflection they are lamentably deficient. Persons of this class witness professors of religion idly standing or sauntering about the entrance of the sanctuary, without any feeling of suspicion that such conduct is indecorous and morally wrong. Imitation follows, and the crowd of loiterers is thus reinforced and kept up from year to year. The evil once confirmed, like an inveterate and infectious disease, is not easily eradicated. Against this ancient, prevalent, bad custom, we openly

protest, and earnestly call on every one who is zealous for the honour of God's house to do his uttermost towards putting the wretched custom down. On our arrival at the temple of the living God, why not at once "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise?" We admit that the materials of which a church or a chapel is constructed, considered abstractedly, are as common as the stone and timber of an ordinary dwelling-house; but as they are devoted to religious services, they are sanctified by the peculiar presence of God. When He appeared to Moses in Mount Horeb under the symbol of a burning bush, He said, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And when the Captain of the Lord's host appeared to Joshua near Jericho, he said unto him, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." But why were these places holier than other places? Because Jehovah honoured them with supernatural manifestations of His presence. If the Jewish altar sanctified the gift, and if whatsoever touched the altar was thereby made holy (Exod. xxix. 37), surely the special presence of God sanctifies the place where He records His name. The modern Jews, in oriental countries, are said to put off their shoes when they enter their synagogues. The Moham-medans likewise always take off their shoes, and leave them at the door when they enter their mosques. The outer court of the principal mosque of Damascus is a thoroughfare for the disciples of the false prophet, but in reverence for the sacred edifice, they always carry their slippers in their hands when they pass through its hallowed inclosure. But such is the irreverence of many professed Christians, that when they enter the house of God they

will not uncover their heads; but seem to think it is a mark of superior wisdom to march up the sacred aisles and take their seats with a familiarity which is scarcely decorous in an assembly of equals. Against these gross improprieties be constantly on your guard.

4. *Be at the house of God punctually at the appointed time.* On this point but few people consider it worth their while to be exact, although it requires no extraordinary penetration to perceive that it is of vast importance. Late attendance originates in different causes.

(1.) Some persons attend public worship late *intentionally*. Their plans are laid beforehand. They have no design to be at their posts when Divine service commences. If they arrive during prayer, or the singing of the second hymn, they consider they are "in time." If they can manage to get leisurely seated before the text is announced, they are "but *just* in time." And if they make their entrance after the reading of the text they are "rather too late." Such conduct is not only disrespectful to the officiating minister and the assembled congregation, inasmuch as it unnecessarily disturbs their devotions; it is also a gross breach of that profound reverence which is due to God.

(2.) Other persons attend public worship late *carelessly*. They do not despise the service of praise and prayer. It is not their intention to molest the preacher or the assembly in their intercourse with God. But they have acquired the bad habit of not preparing for public worship in due time. If they glance occasionally at the clock, they too frequently conclude "there is time enough yet," when it is already too late for their preliminary arrangements. An immoderate portion of time is consumed in the wardrobe and at the toilet. And a third part of the

service is over before they are seated collectedly in the place of worship.

(3.) On the part of others, punctuality is prevented by circumstances over which they have no control. Concerning them we have only to remark, they had better attend public worship a few minutes after the appointed time, than not attend at all. But in such cases it is desirable that they take their places as quietly as possible, and rather occupy an inconvenient seat in the sanctuary, than disturb the devotions of an entire congregation. Singing and prayer, though often valued less than the sermon, are certainly the more devotional parts of the service. But if all hearers neglected them they would, of course, soon grow into disuse to the infinite detriment of public worship.

5. In *"the house of God be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools."* In reference to His own preaching Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." This Divine caution suggests a variety of useful reflections. The plan of this work is too contracted to allow us to investigate fully all the particulars which the subject embraces. Therefore, waving those points which to us appear of minor importance, we shall briefly notice those which are of the highest moment. Then—

(1.) *The preacher stands before you in the pulpit as an ambassador for Christ. In this awful capacity hear him.* Simply as a man he is your fellow creature. But as a preacher of the Gospel he is the messenger of God, charged with the conditions of pardon, peace, and eternal life. If you despise him, you despise Christ, and God the Father who sent Him. But if you receive the true minister of Christ, you receive Christ himself, and God the Father who sent Him. When you go to hear a lecture on any

secular or scientific subject, the lecturer may be a learned, pious, and an eloquent man; but he is not a herald of grace. His peculiar office is not to publish glad tidings of salvation to a 'lost world. But the preacher, as such, is the Saviour's envoy extraordinary, to "beseech sinners, in His stead, to be reconciled to God."

(2.) *Hear attentively.* While the ambassador of Christ is addressing you, do not suffer your thoughts to be diverted by other objects. If they inadvertently start aside, recall them, and keep them under proper subjection. Collect your mind, lift up your heart, and pray—

"Lord, fix my wand'ring thoughts,
Thy sacred word to hear;
With deep attention and with love,
With rev'rence, and with fear."

Do not sit under the joyful sound of the Gospel meditating on the world, and forming new schemes of pleasure or business. When Abraham offered a sacrifice to God, and the fowls came down to devour it, Abraham drove them away. And if domestic cares and secular business would rush into your mind, and divert your attention from its proper objects, drive them away. Inattention to the ambassadors of Christ is inattention to Christ himself. To His apostles Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke x. 16).

(3.) *Hear discriminatingly.* Take heed not only how you hear, but take heed also what you hear. There is special need for this caution during the times which are now passing over us. The unadulterated Scriptures are the infallible oracles of God; but the interpretations which are put upon them in the pulpit, in the professor's chair, and through the medium of the press, are not unfre-

quently forced and dangerous. The highest seats of learning both at home and abroad are guilty of imposing on the Holy Scriptures the grossest perversions. The scandalous corruptions of Popery, the kindred Puseyism of Oxford, the infidel neology of German divines, and the perilous doctrines of Unitarians, furnish a fearful mass of heterogeneous and conflicting misinterpretation of the gospel. As to those men who preach the gospel, but manifest little or no practical regard for its precepts, they should be heard, if heard at all, with the strictest scrutiny. While they remain in holy orders, they must preach, occasionally at least. But as they have no inclination to become genuine Christians, they are void of spiritual discernment; and to their contracted and obtuse apprehension, experimental truth is foolishness, a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence. They are consequently under constant temptation to regulate their expositions of the word of God by their own carnal experience, as though that were the Divinely appointed standard of religious truth. Thus they take away the key of knowledge, and will neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer those to enter that would. To rites and ceremonies they superstitiously attach an unscriptural importance. In their glossary, water baptism is regeneration—ready answers to catechetical questions is a preparation for a farther work of grace—episcopal confirmation is establishment in the faith of Christ—the Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast, and the communicants feed on Christ, and thereby partake of eternal life—ritual absolution is the remission of sins—regular attendance on their ministry is a satisfactory evidence of discipleship. If you would not mistake the broad way to hell for the narrow way to heaven, "from such (men) turn away." 1 Tim. iii. 5.

St. Paul, after having cautioned the Thessalonians to despise not prophesyings, immediately adds, "Prove all things." In the fear of God test the soundness of every sentiment which the preacher delivers, by the touch-stone of inspired Scripture, and "hold fast that which is good." Let neither false philosophy nor corrupt divinity wrest it from you. All attempts at repressing private judgment are unscriptural, and are instigated by ignorance or dishonesty. The privilege to think for themselves, is one of the most valuable birthrights of man. It is one of God's chartered blessings to the human race, without regard to climate or colour, language or laws, caste or office. "Beloved," says the apostle John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world." As the world is not yet clear of false prophets, St. John's instruction is not yet out of date.

(4.) *Hear with a fervent desire to receive good.* "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." He who does not savingly benefit by the preaching of the Gospel does not hear aright. In every case the Gospel is the savour of life unto life, to the person who listens to the joyful sound as he ought to do. To the careless hearer it is a dead letter ; but to the earnest, believing worshipper it is spirit and life. If you come to the house of God not to be benefited, but merely pleased, you will often be disappointed, and then go murmuring home, charging your disappointment on the preacher. If you assign to the preacher a part to perform, but he chooses to perform some other part ; if you wish him to treat your sins with silence, or to pass them by with a smooth and gentle admonition, but he drags them before the congregation, strips them of their

disguise, and exposes their deformity—instead of commending him for his fidelity, you condemn his discourse as too personal, and perhaps resolve to hear him no more. But stop! Listen to the preacher's defence. He assures you that his design is not to offend any one, but to benefit all, that he is under the most solemn obligations to be faithful, that he is responsible to God for his stewardship, and that woe will be to him if he handle the word of the Lord deceitfully. Bestow on his vindication that calm and impartial attention to which it is entitled, then you cannot censure his fidelity. Could we persuade you to hear the gospel with a pure motive, and a sincere desire to receive good, we should assure ourselves of success. The precious seed of life sown into your good and honest heart would bring forth fruit in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. But if you hear the gospel petulantly or with indifference, so far as you are concerned, the spiritual husbandman will sow in tears, and at the end of the world reap no harvest. The faithful steward of Christ, in self-vindication, will have to stand forward as a swift witness against you, instead of acknowledging you, as seals to his ministry, and the crowns of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Reflect on these things ere it be too late. Hear, as God directs, and your souls shall live.

(5.) *Hear thankfully.* To enjoy frequent opportunities of hearing the gospel preached, is an inestimable privilege. Such it has been regarded by holy men in all ages. But to how many millions of our race is this precious privilege yet denied! Numerous tribes, and even kingdoms and empires of vast territorial extent, teeming with population, are now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. In their crowded cities and towns not a single temple is dedicated to the pure worship of God. Surrounded with the

blessings of Providence, they are ignorant of the Being who bestows them, and consequently erect no monument of gratitude to His name—no sanctuary in which to assemble and offer to Him the sacrifice of praise. .

“ In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strown ;
The heathen in his blindness
Bows down to wood and stone.”

And among our fellow countrymen, how many myriads long for the courts of the living God, who are not permitted to enter into them. Thousands are often alas ! condemned to exhausting and perilous service in the field of war. Thousands more are afar off upon the sea. Hospitals, infirmaries, madhouses, and lazarettoes are crowded with suffering wrecks of humanity. Private dwellings, thickly scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land, are tenanted by the sick, the aged, and the infirm. Others are detained from the tabernacles of the Lord by urgent domestic duties. Not a few are deprived of this privilege by earthly-minded employers. Your opportunities of hearing the gospel preached are constantly decreasing. The harvest will soon be past and the summer ended. What an inestimable favour it would be, were conditions of peace published to the finally lost. Such it would doubtless be esteemed by them. And such it should be regarded by you. Then gratefully redeem the time and improve every passing opportunity.

(6.) *Hear for yourself.*—Do not divide and appropriate the sermons to which you listen among your neighbours, and leave yourself without a share. The house of God is a banqueting-room. But no festal board, however well furnished, can nourish a man unless he partake of the pro-

visions. A critical inspection of a table well set out with the bounties of Providence, never satisfied a hungry appetite. It is not the abundance, the variety, or the richness of the food, but the eating and digesting of it, which sustains life, and invigorates the system. A man may perish with hunger in the midst of plenty. In a spiritual sense these remarks apply forcibly to hearers of the Gospel. Every man in his unrenewed state is perishing for lack of bread. In the house of God the preacher spreads a plentiful table. All are invited to partake of the entertainment without money and without price. If you eat you live—if you slight the invitation leanness of soul is your portion. The man who helps others, but strangely refuses to help himself will die, and die eternally. For him there is neither remedy nor hope. If you would not perish hear for yourself, not for others. When your own vices and failings are attacked, and your moral character accurately portrayed, do not take offence and steel your sensibility against the faithful representation. Do not apply to others that which is intended for yourself. But say within your heart, "That remark is for *me*. Of that sin I am guilty. That duty I have neglected. In that snare of the devil I am entangled." Whoever spends his lifetime in scrutinizing and attempting to reform others, but neglects his own heart, will have a miserable account to render at the last day.

(7.) *Hear believingly.* From the beginning God intended that the preaching of the gospel should be a means of producing and strengthening faith in those who listen to the joyful sound. St. Paul, having stated that "who-soever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," inquires, "How then shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe

in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word." Rom. x. 14, 17. From this passage we learn that the gospel is the grand instrument of human salvation; that the gospel must be proclaimed by the preacher, as well as published from the press; that the glad tidings of salvation must be heard; that what is heard must be credited: for those who do not believe the gospel, as the record which God has given of His Son, cannot be saved. And that those who believe this testimony of God, must pray to Him through the mediation of Christ, for a personal and saving interest in the gospel scheme of redemption. A cold antinomian belief in the evangelic message never did, nor ever will, save any man. Saving faith is of the operation of the Holy Spirit, works by love, and purifies the heart.

3. *Retire from hearing the word of God in an orderly manner.*

(1.) Do not rise abruptly from the attitude of prayer immediately after the closing benediction is pronounced; and prepare hastily for your withdrawment from the throne of grace. Recollect you have just been admitted to an audience with God, and the final sentence in the public service was a petition that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit might be with you." From this solemn and deeply interesting communion with the Almighty, is it decent to hurriedly retire? When we see persons impatiently overcrowding the aisles and thrusting their way towards the door, it is a painful symptom that they have forgotten where they are, and for what purpose they ostensibly assembled with the saints of God.

Another evil which we have often noticed is, the levity

and indolence with which people retire from their seats and linger about the entrance of the sanctuary. No sooner is the public service concluded than they cover their heads, loudly greet their friends, take their stand outside the church or chapel door, obstruct the ready egress of orderly people, curiously gaze at the retiring assembly, and enter into light and unprofitable conversation with persons like minded with themselves. Such persons are an easy prey for the devil. If they received any good impressions under the word of God, those impressions are immediately erased by their own irreverence and dissipation. As the wicked one is not resisted, but rather invited, he catcheth away that which was sown in their hearts, and they become increasingly unfruitful. Such conduct is extremely trying to ministers whose hearts' desire and prayer to God for their hearers is, that they may be saved. When Dr. A. Clarke had once preached at Whitby, having noticed the people putting on their hats in the pews, and chatting with each other at the door, he said, "Were I stationed among them, I would either break their customs, or they would break my heart." If we wish to indulge in a little familiar conversation with our friends, we should have a due regard to time and place.

(2.) *Prayerfully reflect on what you have heard.*—The most wholesome and nutritious aliments may be masticated and swallowed; but if they be acted on imperfectly by the digestive organs, disease is the inevitable consequence. Whereas, a healthy appetite and a good digestion, associated with a proper supply of food, build up the physical constitution, and preserve it in a buoyant and vigorous condition. It is so with respect to hearing the Gospel. The bread of life cannot nourish the soul if it be not inwardly digested. The purest and best sermons can do no

good unless they be received cordially into the moral system, and digested by a proper process of reflection. The faculty of thought, as well as the faculty of hearing, must be cultivated and exercised. Having listened to the good news of Gospel grace, you must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. It is not sufficient to hear the word gladly during the half-hour or forty minutes of its being delivered; it should be carefully treasured up in the heart as material for subsequent rumination. "He that received the seed into stony places," says Christ, "the same is he that heareth the word, and anon (immediately) with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but durèth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-bye he is offended." He is sensibly affected while he is listening to the sermon, with the excellency and admirable adaptation of the Gospel to the wants of the human family, and rejoices to hear of the gracious plan which God hath devised to make man happy. But, alas! his goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew that goeth away. The thorny ground hearer is no better. "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." The seed of the kingdom, by the momentum of its delivery, buried itself superficially in the soil of his affections. Had he harrowed it in well by fervent prayer and meditation, it would have taken deep root, and produced a strong and healthy growth. But he foolishly suffered the devil to distract his mind with anxious cares, covetous desires, and the pleasures of wealth. By this rank and obnoxious crop the good seed was overgrown and smothered. By holy meditation the devil is effectually resisted, thorns and thistles are up-

rooted, and the precious seed vegetates and prospers. Let the sermons which you hear be themes of frequent and pious conversation among your fellow-workmen, and especially within your own domestic circle. This practice will bring many remarks to your remembrance which would otherwise escape your recollection.

(3.) *Reduce the truth you hear to practice.* Guilt is rather aggravated than cancelled by a mere theoretical knowledge of Christianity. Men are neither damned for their ignorance nor saved for their knowledge. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Jehovah is a righteous Governor, and He will judge every man according to the light and privileges of his dispensation. From those to whom He hath published a revelation of His will He expects obedience; and without obedience He will not save them from the wrath to come. Many, there is reason to fear, are trusting to their knowledge of sacred things as a substitute for obedience to the will of God. It was a maxim with the ancient Pharisees that "this people who know not the law are cursed." Thus against ignorance, instead of against rebellion, they fulminated their anathemas. Learning was esteemed godliness, and the unskilled in the law were treated with sovereign contempt. But what does Jesus Christ say? He says, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes." It was not legal, according to the Mosaic constitution, to inflict on an offender more than forty stripes for one offence; but for a double offence the transgressor was sometimes adjudged to receive four-score stripes. And it will be more tolerable

for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that man who has been exalted to heaven with privileges, but has neglected to improve them. Not, blessed are they that *know* His commandments, but “Blessed are they that *do* His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Not, blessed are they that *hear* the word of God; but “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and *keep* it” (Luke xi. 28). This saying of our Lord, taken in connection with the occasion which gave rise to it, is peculiarly instructive. A certain woman, who was charmed with His doctrine, lifted up her voice and said, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.” Such an exclamation was perfectly natural for a person who was not improbably a mother. She thought the happiness of a woman who was the mother of such a son was great indeed! And she thought correctly. From henceforth all nations shall call her blessed. But while our Lord admitted the propriety of her remark, He signified that the mere circumstance of the Virgin Mary being the mother of His human nature could not ensure her salvation; and that those only were savingly happy who had Christ formed in their hearts, the hope of glory. Hence we may learn that the blessedness of salvation is realised only by receiving the gospel into our affections, and keeping it there as the regulator of our faith and practice.

The essential difference between hearing the word of God and rendering it practical homage, is forcibly described by St. James:—“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway

forgetteth what manner of man he was." The persons whom St. James combated had sophistically reasoned themselves into a state of carnal security, and he endeavoured to arouse them to a sense of their delusion. The faithful preaching of the gospel is a mirror, which reflects a true likeness of the sinner's moral character. While this picture is held before him, he sees and feels his lost and undone state. His conscience answers to the word of God as face answers to face in a glass. Contrition softens his heart, and he forms purposes of amendment. He resolves, and again resolves, to set out for heaven in earnest. But the preacher finishes his discourse, the mirror is withdrawn, and the vacillating hearer goes away, dismisses his serious thoughts, and forgets what manner of man he is. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." The original word (*parakupsas*), which is translated *looketh into*, "is very emphatic," says Dr. A. Clarke, "and signifies that deep and attentive consideration given to a thing or subject which a man cannot bring up to his eyes, and therefore must bend his back and neck, stooping down, that he may see it to the greater advantage." Or, as Mr. Wesley comments on the passage, "*bending down*, fixing his eyes, and searching all to the bottom."

Many of our regular hearers are the most backward in making a practical use of our instructions. They honour us with their stated attendance, they listen attentively to our discourses; but this is all. They make no progress in the way to heaven. They pay little or no practical respect to what we say. They act as though they thought that transient glances into the mirror of truth were sufficient to

prepare them for the kingdom of God. What a fatal delusion! What a glorious company of saints would these forgetful hearers have formed, had they reduced to practice the sublime truths to which they have listened for a succession of years. What burning and shining lights, what eminent patterns of piety, would they now have been, if they had delighted to do, as well as to know, the will of their heavenly Father! In the language of Moses we close this article: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen; and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life" (Deut. iv. 9).

CHAPTER XIV.

BAPTISM IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

- I. *Baptism is an evangelical institution.* This proposition is controverted. 2. It was explicitly instituted by Jesus Christ. (2). It was administered by the apostles. 3. It ought to be administered once, and once only, to every disciple of Christ. 4. As a Divine institution, it should be contemplated and spoken of with reverence.
- II. *The nature of baptism.* 1. The Roman Catholic view of the subject is dangerously erroneous. 2. The Lutheran Church attributes to baptism a regenerating influence. 3. The same view is entertained by the state Church of England. We believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is unscriptural. Seven reasons assigned for this belief. What then does baptism imply? 1. It is a symbolical rite. 2. A ritual initiation into the visible church of Christ. 3. A symbolical profession of faith. 4. It lays the baptized under special obligations. 5. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.
- III. *Reasons why we believe infants are proper subjects for Christian baptism.* An important rule of interpretation. 1. The covenant which God made with Abraham is the same that now exists between Him and His Church. 2. We believe that baptism under the Gospel dispensation is the same sacrament, substantially, with circumcision under the law. 3. The gracious attention which our Lord bestowed on infants, and what He said concerning them, materially strengthen our conviction, that we do right in admitting them to baptism. 4. Several families were baptized by the apostles. 5. Infant baptism can be traced to a period anterior to the days of the apostles.
- IV. *Baptism may be administered scripturally by sprinkling.* 1. Different senses in which the term baptism is used in the Bible. 2. Scriptural phraseology is abundantly more favourable to affusion than to immersion. 3. In cold climates immersion, without great precaution, would endanger health and life: affusion would do neither. 4. In many circumstances pure water for immersion cannot readily be procured. Mormon baptisms in filthy horse ponds. Remarks.

"Go ye therefore and (matheteusate) disciple all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—Matt. xxviii. 19.

1. *Baptism with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is an evangelical institution.* This doctrine, however, is not admitted univer-

sally by professed Christians. Some believe that baptism is included in those meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, which were imposed on the Jews until the time of restitution. Heb. ix. 9. The Greek word *baptismois*, which in this passage is simply Anglicized into *baptisms*, is supposed to confirm this view of the text. But this assumption, says Dr. Dwight, is without any sanction. We believe the apostle is not here referring to the rite of baptism, but to the numerous purifications by water associated with the Jewish worship; and that baptism, as an initiatory rite of admission into the Christian Church, was in use when this epistle was written. In chapter x. 21, 22, the apostle says, "And having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." By the last expression we understand baptism. The epistle to the Hebrews is supposed to have been written in 64 A.D., thirty years after our Saviour's crucifixion.

2. *Baptism was explicitly instituted by Jesus Christ, in the following terms:* "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. xxviii. 19. The Greek word which in this passage is translated "teach," in the margin is rendered make disciples or Christians. But how are disciples made ritually? By baptism. Consequently unbaptized persons, in a ritual sense, are not Christians. They may nevertheless be Christians in heart, when the omission of baptism is not their fault. On the other hand, persons may be disciplined or made Christians ritually, and yet remain in a state of sin and condemnation if their hearts are not sprinkled from an evil conscience. The evidences on

which this institution as a Christian ordinance rests, are—

(1.) The plain and positive command of Christ which we have noticed already.

(2.) *The example of the Apostles.* St. Peter on the day of Pentecost exhorted the Jews to repent and to enter the Christian Church by receiving the rite of baptism. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 38. Through the same ordinance Paul and Silas admitted the Philippian jailor and his family into the Church of Christ. Indeed, the proof that baptism is a perpetual, Christian ordinance, is so complete, that it is a matter of surprise that any sensible professor of Christianity should assail it with serious opposition.

3. *Baptism ought to be administered once, and once only, to every disciple of Christ.* Repeating the rite, on the same subject, is an unwarrantable innovation, which is practised by narrow-minded exclusionists, under the vain pretence, that men of their order only are duly qualified to administer this sacrament properly. We do not overlook the fact that the disciples of John the Baptist were rebaptized. But there was a reason for this which does not apply to the repetition of Christian baptism. Between the baptism of John and that which was instituted by Jesus Christ, there existed a difference sufficient to justify the rebaptism of John's disciples, on their avowed faith in Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. According to Ernesti, "the difference consisted in this, that John baptised in the name of the future Messiah; whereas the baptism commanded by Christ was connected with the profession, that Jesus of Nazareth who died for us, and after His resurrection, ascended to heaven, is the Messiah."

4. *Baptism, as a Divine institution, should be contemplated and spoken of with reverence.* “The solemn consecration of an individual to communion with the Church, *i.e.*, his first admission to membership by baptism, is a very significant solemnity indeed—a solemnity which aims at the holy object of educating a soul in a kingdom erected by God, and imposes great responsibility on the person thus initiated; or if the subject be an infant, on those who present it to God in this ordinance, and thereby practically profess an intention to educate the child in the Christian faith. On the subject of adult baptism, the rules of the Primitive Methodist Society direct missionaries on foreign stations to observe the following course:—“If a candidate for membership be unbaptised, they shall baptise him.” Rule 12, Consolidated Minutes, 1860. Primitive Methodists, as a Christian Church, are firm Baptists, and are anxious to preserve the institution of baptism in its original purity, simplicity, and design.

II. *The nature of baptism.*

(1.) The view which the Church of Rome entertains of the efficacy of baptism is radically and dangerously erroneous. In perfect accordance with her heretical notions on the efficacy of sacraments, she considers that baptism, when administered by a priest of her own community, applies the merits of Christ to the person baptized, provided the priest so intends; and that baptism is necessary to salvation. She also charitably admits the validity of baptism administered to a dying child by any person present, if there be no priest at hand. Heaven therefore, after all, is not exclusively at the disposal of the Romish priest. We are inclined to believe with Dr. Dwight, that “the clergy of the Romish Church” (to which we may now add many clergymen of the State Church of England) “taught

this doctrine" (baptismal regeneration) "supremely, if not solely, to extend their own domination, and to place mankind at their feet. He whose agency becomes indispensable to the salvation of others, he who can confer salvation on others, will, so far as this power is admitted, bring them universally under subjection to his pleasure. No man in his senses will question the decisions of him who can give or refuse salvation. Is it credible that such stupendous power should be placed in human hands?" Certainly not.

(2.) The Lutheran Church attributes to baptism a regenerating influence, by which faith is actually conveyed to the soul of an infant. The doctrine of salvation in connection with baptism is strongly put forth by Dr. Theophilus Christian Storr and Dr. C. C. Flatt, both of whom were eminent divines of the Lutheran Church. See their "Elementary Course of Biblical Theology."

(3.) On the subject of baptism the legal Church of England, in her baptismal services, still retains much of the language and dogmas of the Church of Rome, from which she recently separated. She speaks of those who are by nature "born in sin" being made by baptism "the children of grace," and she thanks God "that it hath pleased Him to regenerate this infant with His Holy Spirit." Such are the notions inculcated by the legal standard of doctrine in the State Church. But we are aware, and frankly admit, that many ministers of this Church interpret what the Scriptures say on this much-controverted subject in a manner which does not accord with their own denominational ritual. We believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is unscriptural for the following reasons:—

1. Simon the Sorcerer was baptized, but he does not appear to have been regenerated. It was after his baptism that he offered to traffic with the apostles in the gifts of

the Holy Spirit, which conduct drew from Peter the following severe rebuke: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in the matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts viii. 18—23.) In this case it is clear that baptism exerted no saving influence.

2. In 1 Peter iii. 21, the apostle, speaking of the temporal salvation of Noah from the deluge by means of the ark which floated on the water, says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." In this passage Peter asserts that our salvation is not effected by the putting away the filth of the flesh; by which expression we are to understand baptism, for it is of this rite that St. Peter is speaking. Here, then, we have a plain denial by an inspired apostle of the doctrine which we combat. As water is material, and moral pollution is immaterial, it is impossible for water, whatever be the mode of its application to the body, to purify the soul from uncleanness.

3. Baptism, of itself, possesses no spiritual efficacy at all. Of old, Jewish circumcision availed nothing without the circumcision of the heart; as little does baptism avail under the Gospel dispensation, without the purifying laver of regeneration. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John to be baptized of him, instead of admitting them to that rite, and then thanking God "that it had

pleased Him to regenerate" those wicked men, he admonished them in a severe style, and assured them that without repentance and a holy life, they could not escape the wrath to come. (Matt. iii. 7—10.) Baptism, therefore, is not regeneration. It is only a visible sign: moral purification is the thing signified. Or it is a type of spiritual regeneration. Of this vital question many ministers of the State Church take precisely the same view. "You should be reminded," says Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, "that the external rite of baptism, though ever so scripturally administered, will avail you nothing if you are not 'washed from your filthiness, and have not now the answer of a good conscience towards God.'" It is gratifying to find this master of the State Israel expressing himself so evangelically on this momentous subject.

4. In Mark xvi. 16, Jesus Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." If baptism secured regeneration and adoption into the family of God, and conferred a title to the heavenly inheritance, then whosoever received the rite would be made meet for heaven, whether he believes or not. But Christ declares that damnation shall be the penalty of unbelief. We conclude, therefore, with Dr. Dwight, "that baptism neither ensures nor proves salvation."

5. St. Paul declares, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, vii. 19, that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commandments of God." But what did circumcision signify? How is it spoken of in the Scriptures? "It was a seal of the righteousness of faith,"—faith which Abraham possessed and exercised BEFORE he received the rite; so that he was "the father of all them that believe, though they be

not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." (Rom. iv. 11.) A considerable number of Jews were in the Christian Church at Corinth, and to them circumcision had all the influence towards regeneration which baptism now possesses among Christians. But had circumcision secured and proved the existence of regeneration, would St. Paul have pronounced it to be (without faith in God and obedience to His commands) "nothing?" We think not. What the apostle declares of circumcision may with strict propriety be predicated of baptism. Without living faith in Christ, and consecration to His service, it is "NOTHING!"

6. In the same Epistle, xiv. 17, the Apostle says:—"I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Had the doctrine of baptismal regeneration been an article in the Apostle's creed, is it credible that he felt grateful because so few had received the regenerating rite at his hand? As he felt and laboured intensely for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, would he not rather have joyfully baptized all whom he could have persuaded to receive the ordinance by his ministration? But St. Paul knew that without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and the answer of a good conscience, water baptism, whatever its mode, or by whomsoever the rite might be administered, was NOTHING. He therefore spoke and acted accordingly.

7. The non-regenerating influence of water baptism is further proved by observation. "Every tree is known by its own fruit. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit; an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. In like manner a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil

treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil." By these scriptural principles we are warranted in numerous cases, if not in all, to form our judgment of the moral state of men's hearts. Now, if we impartially apply this process of reasoning to the subject under consideration, we shall find it impossible to give all baptized persons credit for their regeneration and adoption into the family of God. On the contrary, from the days of Simon Magus, to the present time—in different countries and churches, multitudes who have been baptized have shown by their works of darkness, that so far from being renovated and holy persons, they have been "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." It is impossible for the abettors of baptismal regeneration to get rid of these difficulties in a satisfactory manner. The shortest way of disposing of them, though not the most satisfactory, is that of the learned Dr. Hook, in his Church Dictionary, in a kindred doctrine, namely, absolution. "Against this form," the Doctor remarks, "Complaints have been made that it is inconsistent with the spirit of Protestantism. With this we have nothing to do. There it is part of the Prayer Book, to every thing contained in which every clergyman gives his unfeigned assent and consent. Nor may any man dishonestly explain it away; a sin against which the English bishops are frequently warning their clergy." With ministers of the State Church such reasoning may have weight; but with men who prefer the Bible to the Prayer Book, and are unfettered by subscriptions and oaths, the Doctor's argument is lighter than vanity. What then does baptism imply?

1. Baptism is a symbolical rite, shadowing forth the renovating influence of the Holy Spirit on the human heart. Water is the grand element of purification, and is

therefore the most proper symbol of the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Divine Spirit. This interpretation of the rite is warranted by numerous passages of Holy Scripture, of which the following are examples:—

“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” Isaiah xlv. 3.

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” When the Psalmist prays for moral purity, he expresses his sentiments in metaphorical language, borrowed from the operation of cleansing material objects with water. “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” In these passages there is evident reference to the outward and visible sign of regeneration or holiness. Now he prays in more simple but sublime language for the inward and spiritual grace: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm li. 2, 7, 10. Although he lived under a dispensation which abounded with ablutions, he knew that the mere washing of water, without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, would avail nothing. In John iii. 5, our Lord says, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To be born of the Spirit signifies spiritual regeneration, or the renewal of the heart in righteousness and true holiness by the Spirit of God. If by being born of water we are to understand baptism,—then this passage teaches two things.—1. That without baptism we cannot properly enter into the visible kingdom of God.—2. That without a saving change of heart we cannot be subjects of the kingdom of grace, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

2. It is a ritual initiation into the visible Church of Christ. But whether a baptized person be a nominal or real Christian; a dead or a living member of the Church depends on other circumstances than that of baptism. In a garden fruit trees may be good or bad, fertile or barren. So in the visible Church of Christ, the members thereof may be believers or unbelievers, righteous or wicked. The mere circumstance of ritual initiation no more proves them to be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, than the circumstance of planting shrubs in a garden proves them to be in a vital and flourishing condition.

3. On the part of persons who have arrived at an age of responsibility, it is a symbolic profession of faith in Christ. When any adult person receives the rite of baptism, it is understood that he thereby professes faith in the testimony which God hath given in the Holy Scriptures concerning His Son.

4. It lays the baptized under special obligations to regulate his heart and life by a steady regard to the Christian Scriptures. We say special obligations, because whether persons receive baptism or not, they are obliged, on pain of damnation, to believe in Christ as the Saviour of the world, and to walk according to His gospel. In the case of persons who receive baptism in infancy, if they do not renounce baptism when they arrive at a riper age, they occupy the position of those who received baptism in adult years. They tacitly enter into the baptismal covenant with the Triune God.

5. It is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Washing with water implies impurity. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The clean need not washing, but they that are unclean. Hence in this rite we are reminded forcibly, by a sensible and visible sign, of

our natural depravity, and consequent need of purification. And as water is a common and efficacious means of removing from the body physical impurities, it points us impressively to the fountain which is open for sin and uncleanness—the sacrificial blood of Christ, which “redeems from all iniquity,” and “cleanseth from all sin.” Titus ii. 14; 1 John i. 7. If “little children are unable to worship God, they are capable of receiving His grace. And in this respect, at least, they may be said to be made disciples of Jesus by baptism, and that they are by this ordinance received into the nursery of God’s Church, into the school established for the purpose of training up worshippers for Him.”—Storr and Flatt’s Bib. Theol., p. 222.

III. *Reasons why we believe infants are proper subjects for Christian baptism.* Before we enter directly on this division of the subject, we beg to remind the reader, that, in searching for scriptural truth, the following important rule of interpretation should be constantly borne in mind, “Wherever our duty demands either the designed omission or the adoption of any given practice, we are obliged, wherever we cannot obtain certain evidence, to govern ourselves by the superior probability.” According to this rule, “if the duty of baptizing infants can be certainly inferred, or inferred with a probability superior to that which is supposed to justify the omission of it, the Scriptures require that infants should be baptized.”—Dwight. We think the superior probability lies on that side of the question for which we contend. “Infants are legitimate subjects of Christian baptism, not on account of what they are, gracious or otherwise; but on account of that to which they are entitled by the unconditional benefits of the atonement.”* But why do we think so?

* *Christian Advocate*, United States, Jan. 13, 1859.

1. Because it appears to us, that the covenant which God made with Abraham, and which he renewed to Isaac and Jacob, is the same covenant as that which now exists between Him and His Church. "Abraham is to be regarded as standing in a federal or covenant relation, not only to his natural offspring, but especially and eminently to all believers. The gospel," we are told by St. Paul, "was preached to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." To the Galatians, who were not of the natural stock of Abraham, but had been sinners of the Gentiles, St. Paul says, "Know ye, therefore, that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham—so then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." If the covenant which God made with that patriarch be not the same covenant as that which now exists between Him and the Christian Church, it appears difficult to determine on what ground believing Gentiles are the children of Abraham, and heirs with him of the same promise. But in the covenant which God made with Abraham, we know that infants were included; and, although they were incapable of exercising faith, they were nevertheless admitted, by divine appointment, to circumcision, which was the sign and seal of that covenant. And as God hath nowhere informed us, that infants are disinherited, the conclusion that they are embraced in the covenant still, and have still a right to the seal of that covenant, which is baptism, is based on a solid foundation. The unity of the Church under both the old and the new dispensations, is distinctly taught by St. Paul, in his Epistles to the Romans xi. 16-18; and to Ephesians ii. 14.

2. *We believe that baptism under the gospel dispensation is the same sacrament, in substance, if not in every circumstance, with circumcision under the dispensation of the law.*

For 1st, Circumcision was a seal of the covenant which existed between God and His Church. And baptism is a seal of the same covenant which now exists between the same parties. It is an external sign and ratification of the agreement into which Christians have entered with their Maker. 2nd, Circumcision was an emblem of moral purification. In a public address to the congregation of Israel, Moses says, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live, Deut. xxx. 6. In harmony with this passage, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." ii. 28, 29. The same things may be said of baptism. It is symbolical of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which," adds the apostle, "he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Titus iii. 5, 6. 3rd, Circumcision was an initiatory ordinance, by which the circumcised person was introduced into the visible Church of God. The same, precisely, may be predicated of baptism. Hence, we see, that between circumcision and baptism, there is a perfect agreement in a triple sense. Of either of these ordinances it may be said—God designed it to be a seal of the covenant of grace, an emblem of moral purity, and a ceremonial introduction into His visible Church. To us it consequently appears, that the *essential unity* of the *circumstantially two* ordinances is supported by conclusive evidence. Consequently, to the rite of baptism we believe that infants have a well-established claim.

3. *The gracious attention which our Saviour bestowed on infants, and what he said concerning them, materially strengthen our conviction, that we do right in admitting them to baptism.* Jesus Christ uniformly treated the little ones, and spoke of them, as members of His Church. Take an example from Matt. xix. 13—15, “Then were there brought unto Him little children, that he should put His hands on them, and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come to me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and blessed them.”

We therefore conclude that infants ought to be received and treated as persons belonging to Christ. Who can lawfully “forbid water” to infants, seeing that Jesus Christ hath received them as well as us? Where is the warrant for withholding from them the sign and seal of their relation to Christ; and treating them as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise?” Such a warrant, if we rightly understand the Bible, is not supplied by revelation.

4. *Several households, or families, were baptized by the apostles: as the household of Lydia, the household of the Philippian jailor, the household of Stephanas, and the household of Cornelius.* Antipædobaptists have struggled hard and ingeniously to prove, that, in these many households, there was not one infant; and Pædobaptists have toiled with equal vigour to demonstrate the opposite opinion. But notwithstanding all the light that has been poured on each side of this dark subject, by the contending parties, a dense and impervious cloud still hangs over the scene, which no controversial luminary is able to disperse. In the midst of this obscurity, instead of being content with opinions modestly expressed,

impatient reasoners are prone to give utterance to unauthorised confidence. If we cannot demonstrate the correctness of our views, we think the balance of evidence is on that side of the question to which we incline, neither can we admit of Mr. Crisp's conclusion, that "none of the jailor's family were infants." This author, like others on this difficult question, has left the subject where he found it—involved in obscurity.

The same opponent to infant baptism adds, concerning the jailor's family, "that they all believed is not less clear from the following words:—'And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.' Thus all his household, as well as himself, rejoice and believe in God—a certain proof that there was not an infant amongst them." But, 1st, the Scriptures do not plainly say that all his house believed; and Greek scholars inform us that the meaning of the original is ambiguous. Hence the passage has been variously translated. Some have rendered the passage, "He rejoiced over all his house, *he* having believed in God." But, 2ndly, if all his house believed, infants are not necessarily excluded from his family. (See the preceding arguments.)

We can produce a strong presumptive proof that in one believing household, at least, there was an infant, or a young child. "In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel we are informed that the child of a certain nobleman was sick of a fever. At the earnest request of the father, Jesus Christ restored the child to health. When the parent received the joyful intelligence of his child's recovery, "himself believed, and his whole house" (ver. 53). Now the question is, was the child on whom our Lord wrought the miracle an adult or an infant? We will

not affirm positively ; but, 1st, the whole narrative is favourable to the latter supposition. Neither speech nor action is ascribed to the child, either during his affliction, or after his miraculous recovery. Secondly, in verse 51, the nobleman's son is called (*pais*) a child, without respect to age ; but in verse 49 he is called in the original *paidion*, which is a diminutive of *pais* ; consequently, its primitive signification is *an infant*. The same term is applied to Moses, when he was only three months old (Heb. xi. 23), and in John xvi. 21, to a new-born child. But as the term *paidion* is sometimes used in a secondary sense, to denote a child of more advanced age, it is not certain that the nobleman's child was an infant ; but the balance of evidence is on that side of the question. Nor do we hesitate to say, that a mind unfettered by theological systems would naturally incline to the opinion that there were infants in some of those families which were baptized by the apostles.

5. *Infant Baptism can be traced to a period anterior to the days of the apostles.* By the generality of people baptism is supposed to have been first introduced by John, the forerunner of our Lord ; but, according to Lightfoot, it had "for many centuries back been both known and received in most frequent use among the Jews ; and for the very same end as it now obtains among Christians, namely, that by it proselytes might be admitted into the Church ; and hence it was called baptism for proselytism." And hence it was distinct from "baptism or washing from uncleanness ;" and that was a common axiom, "no man is a proselyte until he be circumcised and baptized." Nor did the Jews confine their proselytical baptism to adult believers. "They baptized also young children, for the most part with their parents. R. Joseph saith when they

grow into years they may retract : where the gloss writes thus,—This is to be understood of little children, who are made proselytes together with their father.” Again, “ If an Israelite take a Gentile child, or find a Gentile infant, and baptize him in the name of a proselyte, behold he is a proselyte.” From these examples it appears that the Jews received Gentile infants into the Church with their parents, and that, in making proselytes, they associated baptism with circumcision. These circumstances sufficiently account for the absence of direct instruction in the New Testament to baptize infants. “ For when pædobaptism in the Jewish Church was so well known, usual, and frequent, in the admission of proselytes, that nothing almost was more known, usual, and frequent, there was no need to strengthen it with any precept, when baptism was now passed into an evangelical sacrament.” But if Jesus Christ intended the baptism of infants to be discontinued, it was necessary that His pleasure to this effect should have been distinctly expressed. But we have no such record in the New Testament ; and the silence of the Scriptures on this point, in connection with Jewish pædobaptism, amounts to a moral certainty that infants ought still to be baptized.

The fact that infants were baptized in the earliest ages of the Christian Church, is supported by numerous authorities of great antiquity. The following numbered extracts are from Dr. Dwight :—

1. “ Pelagius,” who lived in the fourth century, “ declares that ‘ he had never heard even any impious heretic who asserted that infants are not to be baptized.’ Again he asks, ‘ Who can be so impious as to hinder the baptism of infants ?’ Pelagius is here a witness of high authority. He was born in Britain, and travelled through France,

Italy, Africa Proper, and Egypt, to Jerusalem. He was also an inquisitive and learned man, and must therefore have been well-informed concerning preceding periods."

2. "St. Augustine," a Father of the Church, "born in the middle of the fourth century, says, 'The whole Church practises infant baptism: it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use.' He also says that he 'did not remember ever to have read of any person, whether Catholic or heretic, who maintained that baptism ought to be denied to infants. This,' he says, 'the Church has always maintained.'"

3. "Cyprian," bishop of Carthage, who was in great authority in the middle of the third century, says that "sixty-six bishops being convened in a council at Carthage, having the question referred to them whether infants might be baptized before they were eight days old, decided unanimously that no infant is to be prohibited from the benefit of baptism, although but just born."

4. "Origen," one of the Christian Fathers, born about the year 184, "and a man of more information than any one of his time, says,—'The Church hath received the tradition from the apostles, that baptism ought to be administered to infants.'"

5. "Clemens Alexandrinus," a Christian Father, "born about the middle of the second century, says, 'If any one be a fisherman, let him think of an apostle, and the children taken out of the water.' Clement is here giving directions concerning images to be engraven on seal rings. These engravings were sometimes indecent, and sometimes idolatrous. Clement exhorts Christians to adopt such as are becoming and useful; and particularly exhorts fishermen to choose the image of an apostle baptizing infants. This furnishes a decisive proof that in Clement's view the

apostles baptized infants, and that infant baptism, in his time, was the general practice of the Christian Church."

6. "Irenæus," Bishop of Lyons, "born about the year 97, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, declares expressly that the Church learned from the apostles to baptize infants."

7. "Justin Martyr," a Christian philosopher, "born near the close of the first century, when speaking of those who were made members of the Church, says, that 'a part of these were sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy.' But there never was any other mode of making disciples from infancy except baptism."

The candid reader will now perceive that the practice of infant baptism, during the first and purest ages of the Christian Church, is established by the mouth of more than two or three witnesses. And "from the year 400," says R. Watson, "to 1150, no society of men in all that period of 750 years, ever pretended to say it was unlawful to baptize infants." If, therefore, we assist in perpetuating this practice, we have substantial reason for so doing. The doctrine of infant baptism reposes on truth, and the foundation standeth sure.

To what we have already said we may add, "Perhaps there is not in the world a sight more interesting than that of an infant offered up by believing parents to God in baptism. The helpless circumstances of the child; the peculiar tenderness of the relation existing between it and the parents; the strong expression of their faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to Him, devoting it to His service, and engaging to train it up for His glory; the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit of truth to cleanse it from its

original pollution; the affecting manifestation of the Divine mercy and goodness, in permitting us thus to offer up our children to God; united with the solemnities of the day, the place, and the occasion, form a combination of facts, and doctrines, and duties, scarcely paralleled in the present world. On the minds of the parents particularly the impressions made cannot fail, unless through very gross stupidity or gross wickedness, of powerfully persuading them to the duties involved in this dedication." (Dr. Dwight.)

IV. *Baptism may be administered scripturally by sprinkling.* It may be necessary to repeat, that the term *baptism* is not a translation of the original, but the original itself, with an Anglicized termination. For what reason the translators left this word untranslated was best known to themselves. That they had a reason for this omission is unquestionable: and the probable reason is, that the term has not one definite meaning only, but several different meanings, according to the words with which it is found in company. The Greek words *bapto* and *baptizo* are generic terms; and if they had never been employed, in a religious sense, to convey any other idea than that of immersion, the translators would have probably rendered the Greek words in all their variations, into plain English. Then, instead of reading of "John the Baptist," we should have read of John the dipper—"He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved"—"There is one Lord, one faith, one immersion."—The Jewish service consisted "only in meats and drinks, and divers immersions"—"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews,—when they come from the market, except they immerse, they eat not." Some of these expressions would not, in our opinion, have conveyed the meaning of the inspired writers. And as

they had used the term baptism to signify dipping, pouring, sprinkling, and consequently *purification* in general, the translators probably thought it best, in some instances, to not dogmatically render the word, to dip, or to sprinkle ; but to leave it *untranslated*, and merely give it an English form. See John iii. 25, 26. If it could be proved, that the term baptism is never used in the sacred writings but to denote immersion, every Christian ought to be immersed ; but if it can be proved, that the original term is sometimes used in scripture to signify other modes of purification than that of immersion, then a Christian may be baptized by any of those modes, unless immersion be enjoined and every other mode of baptism be prohibited. But it cannot be proved that baptism, in the Holy Scriptures, invariably signifies immersion.

1. In Mark vii. 4, the original term is translated "wash ;" and that this is its meaning, is obvious from the context. Substitute the word immerse for the term wash, and the propriety of retaining the latter term and rejecting the former will strikingly appear. If the Jews, after they returned from the market, sometimes washed the whole body in a bath, they sometimes washed their hands only ; and if merely dipping the hands in water is baptism, may not a person be baptized without the immersion of the whole body ? And how did the Jews baptize their cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables and couches ? Surely not by immersion. "The Greek word baptism," says Mr. Wesley, "means indifferently either washing or sprinkling. The cups, pots, and vessels, were washed ; the couches, sprinkled." 2. In Heb. ix. 10, Paul says, the temple service stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings (*baptismois*, Greek) and carnal ordinances. Read the term baptisms in this passage immersions, and it

throne of grace. Many churches, nevertheless, use this prayer uniformly in their public worship, while by other churches the prayer is uniformly omitted. But they think if they embody the sentiments of the prayer in their petitions, they fulfil the Saviour's command. Nor must we accuse them of disobeying a positive command of Christ, because that form of prayer which He enjoins, by them, is never repeated. But if a Christian be at liberty to dispense with a prescribed form of prayer, provided he observes the sentiment of the prayer, a Christian is surely at liberty to receive baptism in the most convenient form, when no particular form is commanded. Schreveleus says, Baptizo signifies to immerse, wash, sprinkle. Suidas says it signifies to moisten, sprinkle, wash, purge, cleanse. Dr. A. Clarke says, It is certain Bapto and Baptizo mean both to dip and to sprinkle. See his Note on Matt. iii. 6.

The proselyting immersionist may still contend with the sprinkler, that as the primitive meaning of baptize is to plunge, there can be no true baptism without immersion. But in performing every christian rite or act of devotion, we are not obliged to observe every circumstance which is indicated by the roots of the original terms that are employed to express the rite or act of worship. 1. In the phrase, to make a covenant, the radical meaning of the original verb, to make, is to cut. Anciently, in making a solemn league or covenant, a sacrifice was undoubtedly in general offered, and cut asunder. (Examine Jer. xxxiv. 18. Ps. l. 5.) From this custom the phrase, cut a covenant, or covenant sacrifice, is sometimes applied when we cannot suppose there was any animal sacrificed. (See Job xxxi. 1, and Hosea ii. 18.) But a zealous Covenanter, stickling for the primary signification of the original verb, might con-

tend vehemently that there could be no religious covenant without cutting a sacrifice in pieces.

2. The radical meaning of the Hebrew verb, which in Jer xxxvi. 7., xxxviii. 26, &c., is rendered, to present, is to fall. But the word is undoubtedly employed to signify the presentation of a petition to God, in allusion to the fallen or prostrate posture in which petitions were anciently presented to eastern princes. But does it therefore follow that petitions cannot be presented to God properly without bodily prostration on the part of the petitioner? No surely : for if Moses says, "I fell down before the Lord," and "prayed"—Deut. ix. 25, 26 ; and if Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, kneeled upon his knees to pray—when Nehemiah prayed to God in the presence of Artaxerxes, he was undoubtedly in an upright posture ; for it is extremely improbable that he would abruptly prostrate himself on his face or on his knees, to plead with God while he was serving the Persian monarch with wine. The publican who went up to the temple to pray, "stood" while he presented his successful petition. And many ministers at the present day, present their congregational prayers in a standing posture. And if they do not bow their knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in their ministerial supplications, we are not authorized, on that account, to stigmatize their prayers as solemn mockeries. We hope it has been shewn satisfactorily, that as a religious covenant may be made without cutting in pieces a covenant sacrifice, and as a petition may be acceptably presented to God without bodily prostration, so baptism may be duly performed without immersion. If our views be correct, and for ought we know they are correct, Jesus Christ has enjoined baptism ; but He has not expressed that rite by a word which means exclu-

sively, to immerse, to pour, or to sprinkle; but by a word which signifies all these modes of baptism: consequently His disciples are at liberty to observe those modes which were anciently in use, or to vary them as circumstances may suggest. A sensible Christian, who takes the above view of the subject, will naturally prefer that mode of baptism, which is the most convenient. And of all the modes of baptism sprinkling appears to us the most convenient, and consequently liable to the fewest objections.

2. The scriptural phrases which are used to denote the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which water baptism is an emblem, are abundantly more favourable to sprinkling and effusion than to immersion. Peter, speaking of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Acts ii. 17. What different ideas would have been conveyed had God said, "I will immerse in my Spirit all flesh." While Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Acts x. 44. But a very different event would have occurred, had "all that heard the word been immersed in the Holy Spirit." In Ezek. xxxvi. 25, God, graciously promising the sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit to the house of Israel, says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," &c. From these passages it appears, that sprinkling and effusion are very significant emblems of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Apostles appear to have usually baptized their converts immediately after their conversion. Acts viii. 36, 38, and xvi. 14, 33. But immersion, immediately after conversion, in every climate, in every condition of

body, and in every state of health, in numerous cases would be impracticable : and in many practicable cases the administration would be imprudent. In hot and sultry regions, immersion would be healthy and refreshing ; but in high latitudes, where the cold is intense, the violent shock given to nature by immersion, unless water of a proper temperature were provided for the purpose, might in many cases be prejudicial to health, and terminate in premature death. Mr. Pickering, formerly an immersing Baptist minister says, " I was driven to it (a close inquiry into the subject of immersion,) chiefly by the fact of having baptized a person, whose death I had reason to fear was hastened, if not occasioned, thereby." By the same author it has been remarked, that " Baptists never send missionaries to the Polar regions, but only to hot countries, such as the East and West Indies, where bathing is common." But in withholding their missionaries from the Polar regions the Baptists may be determined by weightier considerations than those of climate. Baptism by immersion has been introduced into Russia, the climate of which is cold and rigorous. In former times when a child had the misfortune to be born in winter, it was plunged without pity under the ice or into water of the same temperature. In the present day that dangerous custom has been relaxed by permission, and warm water substituted for the other ; but the common people scrupulously adhere to the ancient practice in all seasons. On these occasions numbers of children are baptized at the same time, on the ice, and the cold often proves fatal to them. It sometimes happens also that a child slips through the hands of the priest and is lost, in which case he only exclaims, " God has been pleased to take this infant to himself ; hand me another ;" and the poor people

submit to their bereavement, without a murmur, as the dispensation of heaven.—*Chambers's Ed. Journal*, vol. vii., page 382, 1839. If the cold often proves fatal to infants, it may sometimes prove fatal to delicate persons of a more advanced age. But baptism by sprinkling may be administered safely to the most delicate person, in any condition of health, and in any clime under heaven.

4. In many situations a quantity of pure water sufficient for baptism by immersion could not be procured suddenly. Every locality does not afford a river, a brook, or a bath. In some districts, candidates for baptismal immersion have travelled many miles for the purpose of receiving that ordinance, because it could not be performed conveniently in their own neighbourhoods. Nor would it answer the purpose of Immersing Baptists to confine the labours of their ministers to those places where there is "much water." If dipping were essential to baptism, the fatigue of pilgrimage, and the expense of fitting up the necessary apparatus for immersion, should be cheerfully undertaken in every needful case. Mormonites sometimes dispense with these inconveniences by immersing their converts in *filthy horse-ponds*! But as we believe sprinkling to be as valid a mode of baptism as immersion, we advocate and practise that mode, the means of which can be procured the most conveniently. On this division of the subject we conclude our remarks in the following syllogistic form:—"No circumstances can be necessary to the validity of a divine ordinance excepting those which God has commanded in His word. God has not commanded immersion in His word; therefore it is not necessary to the validity of the ordinance of baptism."—*Appendix on the Mode of Baptism, Storr and Flatt's Theology*.

"Those who are dipped or immersed in water, in the

name of the Holy Trinity, I believe to be evangelically baptized; those who are washed or sprinkled with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I believe to be equally so; and the repetition of such a baptism I believe to be profane. Others have a right to believe the contrary if they see good. After all, it is the thing signified, and not the mode, which is the essential part of the sacrament."—*Dr. A. Clarke.*

Remarks.—1. We are not so sanguine as to suppose that what we have written will put to silence the mouth of every gainsayer, and terminate a dispute which has existed seven hundred years. But if those Christian societies and congregations with which we stand immediately connected be in any measure enlightened and benefited by our humble efforts, we have not written in vain.

2. The sacrament of baptism should be administered in gospel simplicity. The institution, in its original form, is remarkably plain and concise. Jesus Christ commands his ministers to "baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And this is all. But with this beautiful and convenient simplicity the rulers of the Church were soon dissatisfied. For them the yoke of Christ was too easy, and his burden too light. They consequently began to mystify the ordinance with emblematical appendages, and to require the presence and co-operation of more parties than were essential for the due performance of the ceremony. And when once the floodgates of innovation were thrown open, a tide of novelties set in, and the original simplicity of the institution was almost lost in the deluge. From ecclesiastical history we might easily collect a long list of ludicrous novelties, with which baptism from time to time was encumbered, not one of which forms the least part of this

ordinance. Hence the wisdom of abiding by that form of baptism which is laid down in the New Testament by Jesus Christ. That person who would enforce baptism in any mutilated or redundant form may be justly accused of "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." What Bishop Hoadly says of the Lord's Supper may be said with equal propriety of baptism:—"All that is added, therefore, to Christ's institution as a necessary part of it, ought to be esteemed only as the invention of those who added it; and the more there is added (let it be done with never so much solemnity, and never so great pretences to authority), the less there is remaining of the simplicity of the institution, as Christ himself left it.

3. Parents, having dedicated your children to God in baptism, do not sit down and conclude that the whole of your duty to their souls is discharged. Watch their opening minds, cultivate their intellectual powers, and feed them early with the sincere milk of the word—with the plain and unadulterated truths of the gospel. From day to day administer reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, as circumstances may require. Support good discipline with good example; then your religious counsels will be "a nail fastened in a sure place." Walk before God and be perfect; and, by a steady and an engaging circumspection, allure your children to follow in your steps. Then, while you are passing through the fiery trials of this life, you will be animated by the ravishing prospect of presenting your offspring to God with exceeding joy, when time shall be no longer; and of rejoicing with them, and with your adorable Redeemer, in blissful union, amidst the imperishable glories of heaven.

4. Reader, have you experienced the renewing influence of divine grace? Forms and modes, however scriptural,

can avail you nothing, unless the Holy Ghost operate on your heart as a refiner's fire, and a purifier of silver (Mal. iii. 2, 3). "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord" (Jer. ii. 22). Come, then, to the blood of sprinkling—to the sacrificial, atoning blood of Christ. Jesus shed his blood for the remission of your sins; and by His Spirit He can cleanse you from all iniquity. By the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for every man; therefore "whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Believe *now*, and you shall be saved *now*. According to thy faith it shall be done. While others are "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings," do you contend earnestly for the salvation of your soul. Enter into thy closet, shut to the door, kneel down, and pour out thy heart before God in the following prayer:—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." If wrangling Sanballat, or his officious servant Tobias, instead of provoking you to love and good works, attempt to divert your attention from the vital concerns of your salvation to the peculiarities of his party, say to him, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. The origin of this institution. 2. The nature of the ordinance. 3. Both elements—the bread and wine—should be administered to each communicant. Absurd reasons assigned by Papists for withholding the cup from the laity. 4. The Lord's Supper is not in every instance essential to salvation. 5. It neither invariably secures salvation, nor is an available substitute for regeneration. 6. The bread and wine undergo no change by consecration. The doctrine of transubstantiation is absurd. 7. The Lord's Supper may be administered at any convenient time and place which prudence may appoint. 8. It ought to be administered uniformly by godly and accredited ministers of Christian Churches. 9. The design of the institution. 10. It is a standing ordinance. 11. In what state of mind we ought to approach the Lord's Table. Remarks.

“Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—Matt. xxvi. 26—28.

THE name by which this holy ordinance is most generally known, is “the Sacrament.” This is an initiatory term borrowed from Pagan Rome. *Sacramentum*, (Latin) signified the sacred oath taken by the Roman soldiers to obey their commanders. In this sense the term is not a proper one to denote the Lord's Supper. (1). Because in this ordinance the communicant does not bind himself by a formal oath to obey Christ, the Captain of his salvation. (2). He is not required to take such an oath. In 1 Cor. x. 21., St. Paul calls this ordinance “the Lord's Table.” “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table

and of the table of devils." In chapter xi. 20, he calls it the Lord's Supper: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Another name, very frequently given to this institution, is, "the Eucharist," from *eucharisesas* (Greek), "and gave thanks." Luke xxii. 19. But as two intelligible, significant, and scriptural names are given by the apostle Paul to this ordinance, we cannot but regret that other names, which are less intelligible and copious, and which are borrowed from dead languages, should ever have been employed to denote the institution. To a certain order of classical scholars, names and technicalities in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin may be more agreeable than terms expressive of the same ideas in their own language; but to the unlearned, nothing is so proper and welcome as truths taught in plain English. An uneducated man cannot conjecture why this ordinance was designated the Sacrament, or the Eucharist; but the Lord's Supper, or the Lord's table, naturally suggests to him that the institution has some peculiar relation to the Saviour of the world.

1. *We will notice the origin of the institution.* Happily this important point is not involved in the least obscurity. It is recorded clearly on the page of inspired history. The original account is placed at the head of this subject. (1.) From the preceding verses we learn that it was during the celebration of the Feast of the Passover that the Lord's Supper was appointed. (2.) From the narrative itself we learn that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Himself. (3.) That the elements used were bread and wine. (4.) That these elements were used emblematically, to represent the body of Christ, which was about to be broken on the cross, and the blood of Christ, which was about to be shed

on Calvary. (5.) That His blood was shed for the remission of man's sins. (6.) That our Lord intended the ordinance to be observed in His Church permanently. (7.) That the institution was designed to be a memorial of our Saviour's sacrificial death. (8.) That the ordinance was to be administered to His disciples in both kinds. (9.) That it was instituted on the same night in which Christ was betrayed. See 1 Cor. xi. 23—29. Had not the original institution been corrupted, a few remarks only would have been sufficient. But as it has been greatly mystified and obscured by the most absurd and self-contradictory interpretations, it is necessary to examine the subject with extreme care and at considerable length. On this important Christian rite volumes might be written; but as we wish to advance no more than is necessary to a clear and profitable understanding of the ordinance, we must aim at condensation and perspicuity. We shall therefore notice:—

2. *The nature of this ordinance.* It is a symbolical religious service. The elements or symbols used are bread and wine. At the institution of the ordinance unleavened bread was used, and wine made from the fruit of the vine. Other than unleavened bread could not be used, because it was then the Feast of the Passover, when the Jews had no leaven in their dwellings. When common bread is used, we are inclined to think that the ordinance loses a part of its signification; but whether the Churches are bound to use unleavened bread exclusively at the Lord's table we shall not undertake to determine. As leavened bread soon decomposes, and becomes unfit for human food, it is used in the figurative style of Scripture to represent moral corruption or sin. And as unleavened bread retains its wholesome properties for a long time, it

is used as an emblem of religious "sincerity and truth," that is, of holiness in principle and practice. When the Corinthian Church was polluted by an incestuous member, Paul compares the conduct of that offender to "old leaven." The leading members of the Church boasted of their intelligence and discernment, chose their respective teachers, and supported them with unbecoming partiality; but shamefully neglected wholesome discipline. Under the withering influence of corrupt doctrines, immoral practices, and schismatical contentions, the Church was rapidly approaching extinction. The apostle rebuked them sharply, and required them to set about an immediate and thorough reformation. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor. v. 6-8. From this passage we learn that leavened bread was regarded by the apostle as a significant emblem of wickedness, and unleavened bread as an equally significant symbol of holiness. For these reasons we think it would be well for the Churches of Christ to confine themselves to the use of unleavened bread in the administration of the Lord's Supper. But as this is not commanded, we dare not say that it is obligatory, especially as the Hebrew law respecting the eating of unleavened bread only during the Passover does not apply to the Christian dispensation. We advise that the bread be broken by the officiating minister—not cut into small cubes or square morsels, before the disciples sit down to the table. 1. Because the bread was broken by Christ

when He instituted the ordinance. It ought to be admitted, however, that as a very thin, brittle cake was used, it was more convenient to break it than to cut it. But apart from this consideration—2. Broken bread was a more striking symbol of what it was designed to represent, than is bread divided into small portions with a knife. When our blessed Lord offered His body as a sacrifice for sin, it was not cut into pieces with a sharp weapon. It was rudely bruised, torn, and broken with different instruments of torture. “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”—Isaiah liii. 5.

But when bread from the raised loaf is used, it may be cut into slices of a convenient size and thickness; and all the crust should be carefully separated, and not laid on the communion-service. The reason for this instruction will appear obvious to every reflecting mind. Nothing should be done, nor left undone, at the Lord’s-table, which is calculated to divert the attention, and thereby interrupt the devotion, of the communicant. “Let all things be done decently and in order.” It may be proper to remark here, that in the apostate Church of Rome “consecrated wafers” are used instead of bread; and the communicants open their mouths instead of their hands to receive the supposed *wafer-gods* from the fingers of their pretended priests. This curious innovation harmonizes very well with numerous other human inventions with which the ritual of that community is encumbered.

The wine should be prepared from the fruit of the vine, and ought to be of the purest quality which the country affords. All kinds of *cheap* and *fanciful* mixtures, which have been invented or adopted by covetousness and

fanaticism, should be conscientiously rejected. In many instances certain mixtures are provided for the Lord's-table, which are really offensive in colour, in odour, and in taste. We are aware of the difficulty of obtaining genuine vinous wine in countries where adulterations are common; but if churches obtain the purest which is obtainable, the God whom they worship is not a hard Master: He does not require His servants to perform impossibilities. But His easy yoke ought not to be interpreted as a licence to modify His institutions to suit our caprice. No human authority has a right to dispense with either of the emblems which our Lord used, and appointed to be used by His Church, nor to substitute any other symbols in its stead. At different periods of the Church, very great and censurable liberties have been taken with the Divinely-appointed elements of the Lord's Supper. It was probably from regarding the bread and wine as mere ordinary food and beverage, that some of the ancient Christian sects gave up the wine altogether, and substituted other things. Epiphanius and Augustine mention an ancient sect of Christians in Phrygia, called Artolyrites, because they used bread and cheese. Others made use of bread and water only. The third Council of Braga (A.D. 675) condemns a custom of communicating in bread and milk.* But as the elements of the Supper are to be regarded in a symbolic sense, after the manner of the Jewish passover, attention should be paid to the nature of the elements, that the symbols and the things symbolized should correspond, and the original character of the institution be faithfully retained. For the sake of decency and propriety, the communion-table should be covered with a neat, clean cloth, and a suitable service should be provided

* Kitto's Bib. Cyclo. Art. Supper of the Lord.

for the bread and wine. The elements may now be regarded as sufficiently consecrated, inasmuch as they are set apart for religious purposes. Elevating the wine, blessing and touching the bread, are merely popish ceremonies, unauthorized by Scripture, and only calculated to please the superstitious, and to embarrass and mislead the sincere communicant.

3. *The symbols, being thus prepared, should be given by the officiating minister to every communicant present.* Withholding the cup from the laity is a most unwarrantable innovation. Not the least countenance to such a custom is given in the word of God. The reasons which certain Roman Catholic writers have assigned for this strange practice are as senseless as they are unscriptural. They are as follow:—

1. "Because true wine cannot be obtained at all places." Granted. But one would think wine which will do for the priest will do for the people.

2. "Some people cannot endure either the taste or the smell of wine." Be it so, this is not a sufficient reason for withholding the cup from those who can endure both, and would thankfully receive the wine as well as the bread.

3. "Sacramental wine is the blood of Christ, and in handing it about it might be spilled, which would be very improper." The fallacy of this notion we shall notice hereafter.

4. "In a consecrated wafer there is a whole Christ, including His body, soul, and divinity; consequently the receiving of the cup is not essential to a proper celebration of this sacrament." For the present, suffice it to say, this notion is a most gross and unaccountable absurdity.

5. "The sacrament is administered to the laity in one kind only; in opposition to Protestants, who insist on the

propriety of administering the ordinance to them in both kind." This is candour associated with presumption and bigotry. Such, reader, are the reasons which a Church pretending to infallibility assigns for departing from the example and command of Jesus Christ. If the symbols used in this ordinance be not equally important, the superior importance ought to be ascribed to the cup, inasmuch as it was the life-blood of Christ, which was shed for the remission of sins. And without the shedding of His blood, sacrificially, there was no remission. The very terms employed by our Lord when He instituted His supper, show that He laid peculiar stress on the cup. With respect to the *bread* He simply said, "Take, eat, this is my body;" but concerning the *cup* He said, "Drink ye all of it;" for as this pointed out the very *essence* of the institution, viz., *the blood of atonement*, it was necessary that each should have a particular application of it; therefore He says, "Drink ye all of it." By this we are taught that the cup is essential to the Lord's Supper. In the absence of the wine, or where it is withheld from the laity, the table of the Lord is only *partially* furnished, and there is no proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. And as the apostles were careful not to corrupt the doctrines and institutions of their Divine Master, they administered the Lord's Supper to the Churches in both kinds. This may be readily collected from their writings. In 1 Cor. x. 16, the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In chap. xi. 28, the apostle speaks as though the giving of the cup, as well as the bread, to communicants, was a common usage and well known to the Corinthian Church: "But let a man examine himself,

and so let him eat of *that* bread and drink of *that* cup.' It is therefore perfectly clear that the withholding of the cup from the laity is a mutilation of the ordinance, a wrong to the people, and a sin against Christ. Let us be thankful to God for authentic copies of the Holy Scriptures, that we may search them for ourselves, and ascertain the true character of Christian doctrines and institutions, and the rights and privileges which are guaranteed to us by the Supreme Head of the Church.

4. *It is not, in every instance, essential to salvation.* It was thought to be so, by some of the ministers of the Church at least, even so early as in the second century. It was probably owing to this error that the Lord's Supper, in that century, was administered to infants. But this error was not peculiar to that remote period. Many, it is to be feared, have been deluded by this fallacious doctrine in different ages of the Church. And it is well if some are not under its blinding influence in the enlightened times which are now passing over us, and in our highly privileged Protestant country. Jesus Christ says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53. Now, if careless and ignorant sinners be taught that the Lord's Supper is THE medium through which they must feed spiritually on Jesus, the Bread of life, they very naturally infer "no sacrament, no eternal life." Some years ago I read of an evangelical clergyman who conscientiously refused to administer the Lord's Supper to improper persons in dying circumstances. But the superstitious parishioners, instead of supporting him in maintaining wholesome discipline, raised a clamour against him, and exclaimed, "It is a shame if the parson be allowed to hinder people from going to heaven." If

we love Christ we shall keep His commandments. Our duty will be our delight. But we ought not to restrict salvation to the Lord's table, and thereby straighten the narrow gate that leadeth unto life eternal. "By grace ye are saved through faith"—not through "the Sacrament." Nevertheless, if you be saved, show your faith by your works. Cheerfully and habitually attend to the institutions of your Saviour.

5. *It is neither the invariable means of securing salvation, nor an available substitute for regeneration.* In John's Gospel, vi. 51, our Lord says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." And in verses 54—56, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." By the careless and superstitious manner in which many commentators, both Papists and Protestants, explain the nature of our Lord's presence at His table, multitudes, we fear, confound feeding on the flesh and blood of Christ with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In a controversial paper—one page and a half octavo—against Primitive Methodists, G. S. Porter, Rector of Anstey, Herts, says, "Our Church also teaches that forgiveness of sins is joined to the Lord's Supper, according to the saying of Jesus, 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;' and invites all her members freely and frequently to partake of it for the maintenance of their spiritual life, John vi. 58. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.'" Here the learned rector strangely confounds things which essentially differ. 1. He confounds

the object for which Jesus Christ shed His blood—namely, the remission of sins to such as repent and believe the Gospel, with what he, Mr. Porter, *imagines* “is joined to the Lord’s Supper.” 2. He confounds sacramental bread with the human nature of Christ. This we think is quite clear. Mr. P. is speaking of bread which is literally eaten at the Lord’s table. But Christ is speaking of Himself as “the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.” “I am the living bread,” says Christ, “which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,” verses 50, 51. But the flesh of Christ and sacramental bread are not identical. The latter is a symbol of the former. And if we wish to know what is meant by eating the flesh of Christ, He explains this mystery in the 47th verse. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Mark, not he that “freely and frequently partakes of” sacramental bread hath everlasting life. No—the Lord’s table can neither impart “spiritual life” nor “maintain” it, without saving faith in Christ. It is a mercy to our country, that there are “Methodists and other Dissenters” to warn unwary people to be on their guard against the heretical doctrines of the Romanizing vicars and rectors of the State Church. How broad would be the way, and how wide the gate that leadeth unto life, if rites and ceremonies secured salvation. But we have not so learned Christ. The sacramental elements are merely signs and memorials, of which the crucified body and the sacrificial blood of Jesus, are the things signified and commemorated. The bread and wine are really eaten and drunk, digested, and become part of ourselves; but the body and blood of

Christ are appropriated spiritually by faith. The Eucharistic symbols may be eaten and drunk unworthily to the condemnation of the unworthy communicant. But the flesh and blood of Christ cannot be unworthily eaten and drunk by living faith. The outward signs may be received without discerning the Lord's body. The communicant may ignorantly rest in the visible shadow. But the invisible substance cannot be received without spiritual discernment and intelligent trust.

The Lord's Supper, therefore, is not grace ; nor the infallible means of securing grace. Like all other gospel ordinances, it is absolutely ineffectual in itself. It possesses no inherent mysterious potency to renovate the heart. It leaves the impenitent, unbelieving sinner, where it found him, "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity;" on the brink of hell, and exposed to eternal fire. Every man ought to be thus informed before he is invited to the Lord's table. Through want of being instructed properly many resort to this ordinance as a passport to heaven, or as an infallible antidote against all evil, past, present, and to come. Having attended externally to the institution, in the customary way, though in an ignorant and impenitent state of mind, they quietly compose themselves, and imagine the work of salvation is completed before it is begun. And when they have departed this life, surviving friends speak of them confidently as having died in the Lord, and gone to heaven, because a short time before they resigned their breath "they received the sacrament, and expressed their readiness to die." If, indeed, they performed these solemn duties properly, we have solid ground of hope concerning them ; but if not—if they ate and drank the emblems of the Saviour's flesh unworthily—they partook of the Lord's

Supper to their own condemnation. The observance of the outward visible sign can avail nothing without the inward and spiritual grace. No soul was ever converted by ceremonial miracles. Unless we be made partakers of the blessings which were purchased by the atoning death of Christ, we cannot be saved, but shall certainly die in our sins. But if the presumptuous and superstitious are not benefited by this institution, the fault is their own. They discern not the Lord's body, and turn that into a means of delusion which God designed to be a blessing.

6. *The bread and wine undergo no change by consecration.* Were it not for the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, there would be no need for this proposition. But it is a deplorable fact, and a fact generally known, that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharistic elements are converted into the real flesh and blood of our Saviour by priestly consecration. This is a sad reflection on human reason and the character of God. In a certain sense, the symbols of the Lord's table may be considered holy, inasmuch as they are set apart for a religious purpose; they remain, nevertheless, after consecration, what they were before consecration—simple bread and wine. The absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, in its incipient form, may be traced to a very early period of the Christian Church; but it required many centuries to bring the gigantic error to perfection. The strongly metaphorical language of Christ, and the exact repetition of His words by the apostle Paul, was variously interpreted by early commentators, and a mysterious influence was early ascribed to the ordinance under consideration. In the dark ages, which were under the fostering influence of ignorance—when the so-called “duly appointed clergy” pretended to edify their flocks with wonderful

tales about saints and devils, angels and the blessed Virgin, and to entertain the true and docile sons of the Church with "the feast of fools," "the feast of asses," &c.,—the dogma of transubstantiation was rapidly developed. In the year 1215 the doctrine was formally adopted by the Lateran Council of the Romish Church, under Pope Innocent III. According to this doctrine, as expounded by the Romish Church, when the officiating priest (as he is improperly called) pronounces these words, "This is my body," the bread is changed into the real body of Christ; and when he pronounces the following words, "This is my blood," the wine is changed into the real blood of Christ." And that even in every consecrated wafer, apart from the cup, there is a whole Christ, including His immaculate humanity and adorable divinity. Were it not that these imputations are well-attested facts, they might be regarded as incredible libels. But it is known throughout Christendom that for the last six hundred years the Papal community has zealously maintained the corrupt doctrine of transubstantiation before the world.

The absurdity of this doctrine is self-evident. It is alike shocking to common sense and unsophisticated reason. Before any man can believe it, he must consent to renounce his reason; next, he must discredit his senses, his sight, his smell, his taste, his touch. Lastly, he must believe that a God of truth and infinite wisdom teaches mankind one thing by their senses and intellect, and a contrary thing by revelation; so that what is sensibly and rationally true, is theologically false. Let a doctrine which inevitably involves consequences so dishonourable to God, and so perplexing to man, be discarded with that contempt which it so justly deserves. The same glorious Creator who formed our physical and mental constitutions, inspired

the holy Scriptures ; and all his modes of instruction beautifully harmonize and conduct to the same conclusions. It is really surprising that any sane man should ever have thought of metamorphosing the Son of God into a wafer, or of transforming a wafer into the Saviour of the world ! We need not marvel at pagans having gods of gold and silver, wood and stone, while professed Christians manufacture gods from the produce of the corn-field and the fruit of the vine. On the part of the Pope it was an audacious experiment on human credulity, to give his sanction to a doctrine so glaringly false. But it is urged by the advocates of this strange doctrine, that "Jesus Christ says of the bread, 'This is my body,' and of the wine, 'This is my blood ;' and who dare contradict Him ?" We admit that He uses the aforesaid expressions. Nor are we disposed to contradict Him. But the spiritual sense of these expressions—not the literal sense—is the true sense.

1. Because the literal sense involves a physical impossibility. It was impossible for the body of Christ to be alive, and in the presence of His disciples, and at the same time handled and distributed by Himself, to them, in the form of bread and wine.

2. Because it contradicts the evidence of sense. But so strong and conclusive is the testimony of sense that it is constantly resorted to, and relied on, in judicial courts. The same value is attributed to sensible evidence in the Bible. "That which we have *seen* and *heard* declare we unto you" (John iii. 11). To convince His disciples of His resurrection, and that it was no phantom, but His real body which stood before them, Jesus said, "Behold my hands and my feet ; *handle* me, and *see* that it is I myself" (Luke xxiv. 39).

3. Because the universal observation of mankind proves

that material substances must occupy definite portions of space, and cannot fill two different places at the same time. But according to the tenet against which we are now contending, every morsel of consecrated bread is an entire Christ, and consequently His glorified body occupies many different places at the same moment, which is absurd.

4. Because the consecrated elements are not rendered by consecration fresh and incorruptible ; but, like all kindred matter, they are still liable to decomposition.

5. Because transubstantiation is not scriptural doctrine, but a Popish dogma, which was invented gradually, and attained maturity and perfection in the midst of the gross darkness and superstition of the middle ages. As to the literal meaning of what Jesus Christ said, it proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. It should be known and carefully recollected, that Jesus Christ did not speak in English, nor in the Romish favourite Latin. Able linguists assure us that in the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Chaldeo-Syriac languages, there is no term which expresses to *mean, signify, denote*, though both the Greek and Latin abound with them. Hence the Hebrews use a figure, and say *it is*, for *it signifies*. Instances of this kind are numerous, both in the Old and New Testaments. In Gen. xli. 26, Joseph says, "The seven good kine *are* seven years;" that is, they *represent* seven years. Daniel says, "The ten horns *are* ten kings;" that is, they *represent* ten kings." St. Paul says, the children of Israel drank of the rock which followed them in the wilderness, and that rock *was* Christ. It *represented* Christ. In Matt. xiii. 38, 39, our Lord says, "The field *is* the world; the good seed *are* the children of the kingdom; but the tares *are* the children of the wicked one. The enemy

that sowed them is the devil," &c. Of Himself He says, "I am the way—I am the door—I am the vine—I am the bright and morning star—I am alpha and omega." The same form of speech is met with in many other places, where we cannot, with the least show of consistency or reason admit the literal meaning. Indeed, the theological doctrine of transubstantiation, like the philosophical doctrine of the non-existence of a material world, is unworthy of a serious refutation. It needs only to be stated fairly to expose its fallacy. In this enlightened age, one would think the Romish Church ought to be convinced of her error. But as she lays claim to infallibility, she would rather adhere to error than revise her creed. Let the reader be careful to separate the chaff from the wheat, to embrace the truth, and hold it in righteousness.

7. *Although this ordinance is designated "the Lord's Supper," we are not hence to infer that the evening of the day is the only time when it can be legitimately celebrated.* The institution is probably called a supper, because it was first ordained at a paschal supper by our Lord. The most convenient season is the most proper season for its celebration.

8. *It ought to be administered uniformly, by godly and acknowledged ministers of Christian Churches.* Ungodly men only expose the ordinance to contempt. A man may be in the imaginary line of apostolical succession, and boast of his education and holy orders; but if he is a stranger to experimental religion, he cannot be "duly qualified" to minister in holy things. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words

behind thee" (Ps. l. 16, 17). Human ordination, of whatever form, apart from a divine call, confers no right or qualification to perform efficiently the functions of the Gospel ministry. No scholastic endowments, no authority from man can supersede the necessity of personal holiness. Nor is any individual community the Catholic, that is, the universal, Church of Christ, however respectable that community may be for wealth, intelligence, and antiquity. Hence the circumspect and accredited ministers of *every* evangelical Church may lawfully, and by virtue of their office, ought to, administer the Lord's Supper to their respective Churches or societies. When narrow-minded exclusionists handle this point, it is curious to witness how they resort to irrelevant passages of scripture, and forced interpretations for support, and with what apparent confidence they rest on sandy foundations, and broken reeds. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the office and sacerdotal duties of the Jewish high priest, says, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (chap. v. 4). Some make this an argument for the uninterrupted succession of popes, bishops, and the clergy of their respective denominations, who only have legitimate authority to fill the office of the Gospel ministry, and to administer God's ordinances of grace. "It is idle," says Dr. A. Clarke, "to employ time in proving that there is no such thing as an *uninterrupted succession* of this kind. It does not exist. It never did exist. It is a silly fable, invented by ecclesiastical tyrants, and supported by clerical coxcombs. But were it even true, it has nothing to do with the text. It speaks merely of the appointment of a high priest, the succession to be preserved in the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. But even this succession was

interrupted and broken, and the office itself was to cease on the coming of Christ, after whom there could be no high priest; nor can Christ have any successor. . . . The verse, therefore, has nothing to do with the clerical office; with preaching God's holy word, or administering the sacraments; and those who quote it in this way show how little they understand the scriptures, and how ignorant they are of the nature of their own office." Even college-bred ministers who have more regard for truth than for sectarianism, will not venture to insinuate, much less to assert, that the distinguished author of these sentiments was an illiterate teacher of Christianity.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, none except Levites could legitimately offer sacrifices to God. King Saul, notwithstanding, in very pressing circumstances, ventured to usurp the priest's office and to offer a sacrifice. For this presumption he was severely chastised. From this circumstance, Mr. Whiston is inclined to believe, "that if there were a city or country of *lay* Christians, without any *clergyman*, they could not lawfully, in the capacity of laymen, celebrate the Lord's Supper, or ordain themselves persons for the due performance of such a priestly duty." When Mr. Whiston wrote this sentence, he surely forgot, if he ever knew, that the preacher of the Gospel does not stand in the same peculiar relation to either God or man, as that which was occupied by the Levitical priest. For, 1. The Levitical priest was a real priest by office, and by Divine appointment. The gospel minister is *not* a priest, in the proper sense of the word. Every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: "wherefore it is of necessity that this man (Christ) have somewhat also to offer." Heb. viii. 3. This passage plainly supposes that a priest necessarily implies the offering of sacrifice. But

what sacrifice has the minister of the gospel, as such, to offer to God? None at all. Once in the end of the world, hath He (Christ) put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and there needs no more sacrifice for sin. Under the gospel dispensation the Levitical priest and the altar are merged in Jesus Christ, who is the only sacrificial priest of His Church. 2. God chose the tribe of Levi to minister before Him in the priest's office, to the exclusion of all the other tribes. But the first ministers of the gospel were Jews, and no tribe or family of the Gentiles, to the exclusion of others, has ever been divinely appointed to succeed them. But if ministers of State Churches will contend for the dignity and privileges of their order, by drawing arguments from the old dispensation, let them submit to the priestly regulations of that dispensation. (1.) In the day that one of them is ordained let him offer a burnt sacrifice of fine flour and oil baked, in the morning and in the evening. (2.) Let him be circumcised. (3.) Let him drink neither wine nor strong drink when he enters the house of the Lord, lest he die. (4.) Let him not marry the widow of a layman. (5.) If he have any personal blemish or defect, let him retire from his office. (6.) Let him have no inheritance among his brethren or fellow-parishioners. (7.) When he commits sin let him offer unto the Lord a young bullock for a sin-offering, &c. To such regulations we are confident the ministers of State endowed churches would not like to submit. Why then do they act so inconsistently, as to try to prove themselves the only duly authorized ministers of Christ, by arguments drawn from legal institutions? According to the 19th Article of the Church of England, "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached and the sacra-

ments (namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper) be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that are of necessity requisite to the same." We presume that Dissenting Churches, in point of faithfulness to the truth as it is in Jesus, will bear a comparison with churches as by law established; and hence infer that their ministers have an equal right with them to administer the Lord's Supper to the people of their charge.

9. *The design of the institution.* Christian duties constitute a reasonable service. Every Christian is required to be ready always to give an answer to every one who asketh a reason of the hope that is in him. We ought therefore to know *why* we serve God by performing certain definite acts of worship. Of the Lord's Supper, the Jewish passover was an illustrious type. And concerning that ordinance Moses says, "It shall come to pass that when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." Exodus xii. 26, 27. Similar instruction is given us concerning the Lord's Supper. "Do this," says our Saviour, "in remembrance of me." It is obvious, therefore, that the holy supper has a mnemonic character. From the remotest antiquity the institution of feasts, games, &c., has been used in commemoration of past grand events. The Sabbath was instituted to keep up the remembrance of the creation in six days. The Passover to perpetuate the remembrance of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Feast of Tabernacles in commemoration of their dwelling in moveable tents during their peregrinations in the wilderness forty years. Pentecost, to remind them of the

giving of the law from Mount Sinai. The Lord's Supper is the feast of the new covenant, or a feast which has reference to the chief blessing of the new covenant—the sacrificial and atoning death of Christ. Consequently, as often as we eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, we should do it in grateful remembrance of Christ.

1. In remembrance of His love. This affecting ordinance should awaken in our forgetful minds, the most lively and thankful recollections of the unspeakable love wherewith the Saviour loved us in laying down His life for our salvation. Remember that He is a friend who loveth at all times. A friend that sticketh closer than a brother. A faithful and an unchangeable friend to such as love Him and keep His commandments.

2. In remembrance of His sufferings. Let the broken bread remind you of His body, which was rudely ploughed with scourges, rent with nails driven through the most nervous and sensitive parts of His frame, pierced with a spear, and agonized on the accursed tree. Let the cup remind you of His most precious blood which, during His dreadful conflict in the garden, fell in large coagulated drops to the ground—which issued from His hands and feet, and flowed from His benevolent heart. Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow. Look, by an eye of faith, through the signs to the things signified. At the holy table see Him crucified afresh before your eyes. Contemplate His incomprehensible mental anguish. It pleases the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. His soul is made an offering for sin; and He becomes obedient unto death, even the painful, lingering, ignominious death of the cross!

3. In remembrance of His atoning grace. Whenever you approach the Lord's table recollect that all have sinned

and come short of the glory of God, that without shedding of blood there was no remission—that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. The claims of Divine justice must be satisfied, either by the death of the transgressor, or the voluntary and sacrificial death of an available substitute. Such a substitute is provided in Jesus Christ. “He purchased the Church with His blood.” Hence says the apostle, “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.” It was not merely or chiefly for the sake of setting us an heroic example, that Jesus poured out His soul unto death on the cross. The grand design was to make reconciliation for sin. When he presented the holy cup to His apostles, He said unto them, “Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.” Whenever therefore we commemorate the death of Christ, at His table, our minds should be deeply impressed with the dreadful demerit of sin, and with the infinite merit of our Redeemer’s sacrifice on the cross. By this wonderful transaction He is the meritorious cause of our salvation. He is the new and living way by which we can enter the holy of holies, and gain free access to God, for pardon, purity, and heaven.

4. In expectation of His return to collect His followers to Himself. “For as oft as ye do it ye do shew forth the Lord’s death till he come.” Although Christ is our Forerunner, ascended to heaven in the presence of His Apostles, and has resided in glory upwards of eighteen hundred years, He will assuredly return, gather together his widely scattered flock, and reascend with them to Paradise. Just before He left this world He said to His disconsolate followers, “Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe

in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 1—3. The second advent of Christ to assemble His followers, who shall then be alive on the earth, and to revive the bodies of departed saints, and reascend with them to heaven, are glorious truths which are revealed to us in the word of God. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go to glory before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. iv. 14, 18. As often as we celebrate the Lord's Supper we shew forth—that is, we declare our belief in the Scriptural testimony concerning the death of Christ, and thereby contribute to perpetuate a lively remembrance of that grand and solemn event among mankind till the general resurrection, and the day of judgment.

10. *The Lord's Supper is a standing ordinance.* Some Christians regard this ordinance as a mere type of our Lord's death, and consequently believe the ceremony should have never been repeated. That this opinion is an erroneous one, what St. Paul says in 1 Cor. xi. 23—29, is almost as clear a proof as the nature of the case will

admit. The Apostle was not converted till about four years after our Saviour's crucifixion. Three years after his conversion he spent fifteen days with Peter at Jerusalem. After the expiration of sixteen years more, he wrote this Epistle, from which it is evident that the Lord's Supper was then a standing ordinance in the Corinthian Church. And as no intimation is given to the contrary, we may conclude fairly that it was a settled institution in every other part of Christendom. It is therefore sufficiently clear, that the immediate disciples of Christ did not look on it as a passing type; but as an abiding institution. It was accordingly observed by the Churches in all succeeding ages. This is manifest from ecclesiastical history. The manner in which the last, though not least of the apostles expresses himself, intimates clearly that he expected this institution would be perpetuated to the end of time. And the authority of an inspired apostle will be acknowledged by every well-informed and unprejudiced Christian. Consequently, we shall not be faithful to our trust, unless we devoutly observe this sacred rite, and transmit it uncorrupted to the generation following.

The ordinance should be celebrated frequently. This is implied in the following form of instruction, which our Lord gave to His followers: "As oft as ye do it, ye do it in remembrance of me." Precisely how often we should do this thing, forms no part of our Saviour's command. The early Christians used to celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly, sometimes oftener. But the example of the primitive Christians is not a standard by which we are bound invariably to regulate our conduct. Things which are left undetermined by the word of God may be safely regulated by the rulers of Christian Churches, provided they do not act contrary to the analogy of faith. But if our

Lord designed His followers to observe this ordinance to the end of time, it is unquestionably their duty to perpetuate its continuance by both example and precept. And it is really surprising that so many professed Christians are afraid of provoking His anger by communicating unworthily, while so few are afraid of incurring His displeasure by slighting His command. In the infancy of the Church, voluntary absence from the Lord's table, on the part of His avowed disciples, was regarded as a culpable neglect.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated publicly. The complex design of the institution suggests the propriety of celebrating it openly. As the ordinance is a commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ, it ought not to be concealed and treated as a mystery. This very deeply affecting form of communion with Christ and with each other should be gratefully observed in each other's presence. The service is highly calculated to strengthen our faith in Christ, our love to Him, and our affection for one another and for the whole human family. In certain cases, to be judged of by ministers, the private celebration of the holy supper is not only allowable but commendable. Sickness, infirmity, and other peculiar circumstances, may render public communion impracticable, when the parties who desire to partake of the ordinance are entitled to the privilege. In such instances it should be recollected that Jesus Christ is present to accept our worship, wherever two or three meet together in His name.

From the nature of this institution we think it is evident that it was not intended for young children. The Jews never suffered their sons to eat of the flesh of any victim till they had themselves offered a sacrifice at the

Temple, which they were not permitted to do before the twelfth year of their age. It was at this age that Joseph and Mary took our blessed Lord to the temple, probably to offer this sacrifice.* This ordinance, unlike that of baptism, is not designed for mankind without regard to age. It is therefore proper that the holy supper should be withheld from children till they are capable of discerning the peculiar character of the institution.

11. *In what state of mind we ought to approach the Lord's table.* "If I regard iniquity in my heart," says the Psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." And if we receive the symbols of the Saviour's broken body and atoning blood in an unworthy manner, our communicating, instead of honouring the Saviour and benefiting ourselves, will only aggravate our guilt in the sight of God. Then,

1. If we would celebrate the Lord's Supper profitably, we must in our hearts abhor that which is evil. Sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hateth. Sin crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts Him to an open shame. And if we indulge this odious principle, at the same time that we profess the tenderest regard for the Saviour, He will, in effect, say of us as He said concerning Judas, "The hand that betrayeth me is with me on the table; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed."

2. We must possess a fixed purpose of obedience. "If ye love me," says Christ, "keep my commandments." The man, therefore, who is fully set in his heart to do evil, or who halts between two opinions, is very far from being in a suitable state of mind to approach the Lord's table. But whoever is resolved, by the grace of God, to yield himself henceforth as an obedient servant unto

* Dr. A. Clarke's Com. on Exod. xii. 26.

Christ, may come boldly to the throne of grace, and celebrate the commemorative festival of the holy supper. But let the man whose heart is hardened and polluted by unrepented of sin, not presume to taste or touch the consecrated emblems.

3. We must feel our souls penetrated with brotherly love. With a sincere and fervent affection to the people of God, because they are His people. The religious bigot cultivates and exercises a species of love; but it is sectarian in its essential character. It is cautious and exclusive in its selection, and not unfrequently blind and doting towards the few who are found within its contracted circle. But it has no sympathy with the large heart, the intelligent piety, and the liberal affection which inspired the apostolic prayer: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." On the contrary, the Christian whose soul is enlightened and expanded by a fervent, manly piety, throws the arms of his affection around the whole household of faith, and embraces them all with his ample and cordial grasp. To His followers Jesus Christ says, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." "If, therefore, thou hast aught against thy brother, first go and be reconciled unto him, then come and offer thy gift." Or if thou hast wronged him, first go and acknowledge thy fault and seek reconciliation, then come and implore forgiveness at the hands of God. They who are too proud or stubborn to confess their sins, or too unrelenting to forgive a penitent his trespasses, are not yet prepared to approach the communion table. Hear what the Redeemer says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." We must—

4. Cherish good will towards universal man. Not an

individual of the human race must remain to us an object of hatred and ill-will. If for the sake of self-protection, and the maintenance of justice, we have sometimes to resort to law and physical force to restrain and punish offenders, we should use such correctives with reluctance. We may hate sin with a perfect hatred, whether it appear in ourselves or others, and assist in upholding social order; but we may not, on any account, hate the sinner. We are not appointed God's executioners. We are not even allowed to revenge ourselves; "For it is written, vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord." Christ loved us while we were yet sinners, and we ought also to love our fellow-men, so as to study to promote and rejoice in their welfare. If we approach the Lord's table with the dispositions which we have just enumerated and described, He will make us welcome, and our souls will feast on the fatness of His house.

REMARKS.

1. To impenitent sinners.—If any one presume to kneel down at the Lord's table, and in that lowly attitude profess that he believes in the redeeming blood of Christ, while he practically tramples it under foot, instead of rendering unto God an acceptable sacrifice, he is guilty of daring irreverence and hypocrisy. The counterfeit humility of such a communicant cannot fail to incur the displeasure of God. He requires truth in the inward parts. And if formalists will partake of the holy Supper after we have forewarned them not to do so, their blood will be upon their own heads. Judas the traitor was no better man, but much worse, for disguising his treacherous designs beneath the mask of friendship, and betraying the Son of Man with a kiss. And what a brood of vipers—what whited walls and painted sepulchres are those persons, who one day

are seen falling prostrate on their knees around the communion table, professing sorrow for sin, love to Christ, and faith in His atoning blood, and the next day are found at their heathenish sports, or perhaps ignominiously immersed in rioting and drunkenness. How superficial was the impression which was made on their hearts, by the most solemn and affecting ordinance! How soon have they forgotten their formal preparation! How hastily have they violated those vows which they never heartily intended to fulfil! Truly, "Their goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew that goeth away." On the page of evangelical history, the conduct and fate of Judas stands, as a tall beacon, to warn every man against indifference and presumption. To this warning voice listen attentively.

2. As the impenitent sinner is unprepared to enjoy a special means of grace on earth, he may rest assured that he is not meet to participate in the glory of heaven. And how insipid, worthless, and transient are the pleasures of sin—the beggarly elements of the world, when compared with the inestimable blessings of the gospel and the imperishable glories of paradise! But sinner, except you eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of God, you have no life abiding in you. That is, except you feed on Christ by faith, you are dead in trespasses and sins: and the dead in sin have no title to everlasting life.

3. To believers in Christ. Some of you perhaps say, "We would not wilfully slight our Saviour's institutions, nor carelessly omit our duty, but we are afraid of committing a greater sin by communicating than by absenting ourselves from the holy table. We are unworthy; and he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh to his own condemnation." Well, with regard to merit,

the holiest saint is unworthy of the least mercy. On the ground of desert we can claim no good thing. Salvation from first to last is all of grace. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." But the absence of merit cannot justify disobedience. We have no meritorious right to a revelation of God's will—to proclaim the gospel, to listen to its joyful tidings—nor to enjoy access to the throne of grace. These are all undeserved favours. But we do not therefore refuse to read the Bible—to preach the gospel and to hear the gospel expounded—nor to pour out our hearts in praise and prayer at the mercy-seat. If we worship God in spirit and in truth, the worthiness of Christ will more than counterbalance our unworthiness. Just the same mode of reasoning should regulate our conduct when we are invited to the Lord's table. A wicked man might as well refuse to hear the gospel preached, because forgetful hearers shall perish, as a good man to absent himself from the Lord's Supper, because hypocritical and presumptuous communicants will be damned. But it is the sinner's duty to hear the word of God preached, and it is the believer's duty to approach the Lord's table when it is spread before him. Besides, there is a worthiness of meetness, if not a worthiness of merit, of which every true disciple of Christ is a partaker. To the few faithful souls in the formal Church of Sardis, He that hath the seven stars says, "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Rev. iii. 4. Through the all-cleansing blood of Christ, it is the privilege of every believer, worthily to eat of this bread, and to drink of this cup.

4. As the household of faith feast together at the communion-table upon earth, so they will feast together in the kingdom of heaven. They shall sit down with Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob in paradise. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will feed them, and will lead them to living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Sensations of want and inconvenience will be unfelt and unknown. Happiness consummate—happiness uninterrupted—happiness never-ending, will then be the portion of every glorified follower of Christ. And then shall come to pass the saying which is written:—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Psalm xvii. 15.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NATURE, DUTY, AND NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

I. The nature of prayer. Definitions and descriptions of prayer by several authorities. II. Prayer is a duty. 1. In some passages of Scripture we are commanded to pray. 2. Other texts afford direct encouragement to prayer. 3. The duty of prayer is enforced by the example of Christ, the Apostles, and the Primitive Christians. III. Prayer is necessary to salvation. 1. Many persons have an aversion to prayer. 2. Ministers sometimes express themselves unguardedly. 3. Infidel notions of Mr. George Combe.

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”—Luke xviii. 1.

THERE is not a more solemn and important duty in which man can engage than that to which our attention is invited by the title of this chapter—PRAYER. So important and comprehensive is this subject that it would be no difficult task to devote to it all the space which is allotted to this volume. But this would not accord with the plan of the work. We must therefore compress our remarks within much narrower limits. Nevertheless, with a view to assist the reader’s judgment and memory, we will present our thoughts in something like a methodical form. We shall notice

I. *What is the nature of prayer.* On this momentous theme, many of the greatest and holiest minds have bestowed their devout and careful attention, and have published their well-digested and mature thoughts for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. To the question, what is prayer? the Westminster Catechism answers, It “is the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our

sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." "Prayer," says Dr. Dwight, "is an act of worship, consisting of four great parts: adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving." Such are the definitions of prayer by these two respectable authorities. But we must certainly not suppose that these definitions are unexceptionable and complete. They are both defective; the latter is especially so. It includes no mention of, or reference to, Jesus Christ, as Mediator between God and man. On the other hand, it supposes that every act of prayer includes the "four great parts" which the learned Doctor has enumerated. But the Scriptures relate numerous instances of prayer with approval, in which one or more of these "four great parts" are omitted. Many such instances will doubtless occur to the recollection of every attentive reader of the Bible. "Prayer," says Hannah More, "is desire. It is not a mere conception of the mind nor a mere effort of the intellect; but an elevation of the soul towards its Maker, a pressing sense of our own ignorance and infirmity, a consciousness of the perfections of God, of His readiness to hear, of His power to help, of His willingness to save. It is not an emotion produced in the senses, nor an effect wrought by the imagination; but a determination of the will, an effusion of the heart." Prayer, like every other act of religious worship, is a reasonable service, and consequently involves the exercise of the understanding. It is not a mere science, but devotion also, and therefore stimulates to healthy action the emotions of the heart. In preparing rightly to approach the throne of grace, and in our pleadings with God when we kneel there, both the intellectual and moral attributes of the soul are devoutly engaged. "What is it then?" says the apostle Paul. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will

pray with the understanding also." Corrupt as the religion of the Mohammedans is, its doctors have preserved some excellent sentiments concerning the nature and value of prayer. They teach that prayer is the corner-stone of religion, and the pillar of faith. And that it is not a thing of mere *form*, but requires that the heart and understanding should accompany it, without which they pronounce it to be of no avail.

According to Dr. A. Clarke, "a proper idea of prayer is, the pouring out the soul before God, with the hand of faith placed on the head of the Sacrificial Offering; imploring mercy, and presenting itself a free-will offering unto God; giving up body, soul, and spirit, to be guided and governed as may seem good to His heavenly wisdom, desiring only perfectly to love Him, and serve Him with all its powers, at all times, while he has a being." The true eloquence of prevailing prayer consists not in a ready utterance, but in the fervency of desire and the steadfastness of evangelical faith. Fluency of speech in a person who leads domestic or social worship, may be very agreeable and useful to an assembly, whose duty it is to unite in offering up prayer to God; but it is not essential to acceptable and efficacious supplication. Prayer is communion with God. It is a solemn interview between the finite spirit of man and the infinite eternal Spirit, who created and sustains the universe by His almighty power.

While engaged in this sacred exercise, a deep, feeling sense of Jehovah's greatness and man's comparative littleness, and more than this, a clear, strong conviction of the Divine purity and man's sinfulness, may so overwhelm the soul that it may feel at a loss to give utterance to its profound emotions. But the unutterable groan of the inner man is pregnant with meaning. And God, who

formed the heart, fully understands its griefs, its sighs, and its inexpressible aspirations. To what I have advanced I feel constrained to subjoin the following correct and beautiful sentiments from Montgomery, one of the sweet singers of the Christian Israel :—

“Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unutter'd or express'd,—
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,—
The falling of a tear,—
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high ”

II. *Prayer is a duty.* In the absence of a Divine revelation, the instincts of our nature and the variable course of Providence strongly intimate that we ought to pray to our Creator and Preserver for His protection, guidance, and blessing on our endeavours. By the lamp of reason, assisted probably by the lingering rays of supernatural light, the most intelligent heathen discovered that they were “the offspring of God.” Prayer accordingly formed a considerable part of their worship. By the same mediums of instruction we might have been conducted to the conclusion that God made us and not we ourselves. And it seems perfectly consistent with reason that we should adore and pray to Him, to whom we are indebted for our existence and preservation. But in the refulgent light of revelation the duty of prayer stands out in bold relief, so that he who runs may read. The Holy Scriptures very distinctly join prayer as a duty, and assure us of

its acceptance and efficacy with God. They furnish precepts and examples of this nature to a great extent.

1. In some passages of Scripture we are commanded to pray. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," &c. (Phil. iv. 6.) "Pray without ceasing." (1. Thess., v. 17.) "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." (1 Peter iv. 7.) "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." (James v. 13.) The Bible abounds with kindred passages; but these, we presume, are sufficient for our purpose.

2. Other texts afford direct encouragement to prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. vii. 7.) "If ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.) "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.)

3. The duty of prayer is enforced by the example of Christ, His apostles, and the primitive Christians.

(1). By the example of Christ. As He was the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, He deemed and felt it proper to pray to His heavenly Father for blessings which He desired. Sometimes He prayed for Himself. "Then saith he unto them (Peter, James, and John), My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The cup here referred to was that mental agony which our blessed Lord endured in behalf of a guilty and ruined world. "He suffered the just for the

unjust, that he might bring us to God." In reference to His prayer during that season of unutterable anguish, St. Paul says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." (Heb. v. 7). If it be difficult to fix the precise meaning of this peculiar passage of Scripture, one thing is perfectly clear—namely, that in a moment of extreme anguish, Christ prayed to the Father for succour.

At other times he prayed for His disciples. Read the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel. From this mediatorial intercession it is evident that our Lord did not merely pray for His contemporary followers, but for those also who should hereafter believe in Him through their word. "This prayer, therefore, extends through all all ages, and takes in every soul that believes in the Lord Jesus."

(2.) In imitation of their Divine Master, the apostles prayed—

First, for themselves. After the ascension of Christ into heaven, the sacred historian having enumerated the apostles by name, adds, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." (Acts i. 14.) Considering the humble positions and vocations from which they had been called, and the times in which they lived, they were eminently gifted men—men of quick perception and strong understanding. In those advantages which are derived from a liberal education they were deficient. With the endowments of nature they were enriched above many of their equals. They had enjoyed the personal instructions of the Messiah. Blessed

were their eyes, for they saw, and blessed were their ears, for they heard. Kings, and prophets, and righteous men, desired to see the things which they saw, and to hear the things which they heard, but died without the privilege. But highly favoured as the apostles were, they distrusted their own sufficiency. They deeply felt, and humbly acknowledged their need of help from above. They consequently frequented the throne of grace, that they might obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need. "The gift of teaching was not exercised to the exclusion, nor even to the repression, of prayer. The disciples did not come together only when some one was prepared with a deep and weighty discourse on points of essential doctrine. Prayer was one of their habitual exercises; not merely hearkening to the solitary prayer of one gifted preacher, in the great congregation, before or after his sermon; but prayers in frequent and familiar fellowship—prayers prompted then and there, without book and without study; prayers of private disciples who had no higher gift, but who could pour out their requests to God; prayers by men with provincial speech, and all the marks of being unlearned and ignorant, but also with clear signs that the Spirit was helping their infirmities, and teaching them what they should pray for as they ought."*

The apostles prayed for others. Immediately before Paul took his leave of the Churches of Miletus and Ephesus, he called the elders together, delivered to them a farewell address, and then "kneeled down and prayed with them all." (Acts xx. 36.) On that deeply affecting occasion, the apostle undoubtedly pleaded with God in behalf of the objects of his holy and anxious solicitude. In his epistle to the Church in the imperial city of Rome,

* Arthur's "Tongue of Fire."

the same apostle says, "I make mention of you always in my prayers," &c. (i. 9.) And again, "Now the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (xv. 13.) The same prayerful solicitude he felt for other churches (see Phil. iv. 6), and for his beloved son Timothy. "I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." (2 Epistle i. 3.)

(3.) The example of Christ and His apostles was copied by the primitive Christians.

The three thousand souls who were added to the Church on the day of Pentecost, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42.) Although they enjoyed *converting* grace, they felt that they could not make progress in the way of salvation without *preserving* grace. They understood that without Christ they could do nothing. And they had the good sense to conclude, that they had no scriptural warrant to expect His sustaining, guiding, and protecting grace, without unceasing supplication to Him for His continued assistance. From these several kinds of evidence the proof is complete, that PRAYER is a duty. Consequently, the man who does not acknowledge himself bound by this duty, has no right to the honourable appellation of Christian. A prayerless disciple of Christ is an imaginary being. Of every true follower of God it may be truly said, "Behold, he prayeth."

III. *Prayer is necessary to salvation.* 1. Many persons have an aversion to prayer, and not a few positively hate prayer, who, nevertheless, wish and hope to go to heaven when they die. All such wishes are vain. All such hopes will perish. Desires and expectations of this kind

cannot be otherwise than highly sinful in the sight of God, inasmuch as they necessarily involve the elements of unbelief and presumption—unbelief, in that the testimony of God is not credited—presumption, in desiring that the word of God may be ultimately falsified. Objections to prayer are numerous, and some of them present a plausible phase ; but they are all the offspring of ignorance and sin. Objections to prayer are supported by different chains of argument, according to the class of infidels to which the objector belongs. Is he an atheist ? It is impossible for him to believe in the utility of prayer, unless he believe also in the utility of delusion. No man can pray sincerely who does not believe in the real existence of the being to whom he addresses his supplication. Consequently, the fool, who “says in his heart there is no God,” charges the Christian, who confides in the efficacy of prayer, with believing a lie. Is the objector a deist ? His denial of the necessity of prayer is based on the infinite knowledge and immutability of God, and his indifference to human conduct.

2. And it is to be regretted that ministers of the gospel and ecclesiastical courts of high authority have given some countenance to these infidel notions, by the unguarded manner in which they have recorded their sentiments. “Prayer,” says Dr. Leechman, Professor of Divinity in the College of Glasgow, “only works its effects upon *us*, as it contributes to change the temper of *our* minds.” Every Christian Church, and every individual Christian, who believes and teaches the doctrine of absolute and unconditional decrees, may lead a sinner to conclude that his state cannot be altered by prayer, and, consequently, that prayer is not obligatory. If we assume, with the genuine Calvinist, that prayer is an essential part of the plan of

salvation, still, the predestinarian does not always express himself on this point with sufficient clearness, and thereby occasions sagacious infidels to speak of this Christian duty in a strain of triumphant contempt.

3. That strange medley of a man, Mr. George Combe, in his "Constitution of Man," writes sometimes like a profound Christian philosopher; anon he discourses like a sensible heathen fatalist. On the physical laws by which it has pleased the all-wise Creator to govern this world, he offers many valuable remarks. On prayer he falls into rank infidelity, limits its influence entirely to a reflex operation on the mind of the suppliant, laughs at the idea of Divine interference in answer to human entreaty, and cites doctors of divinity and prelates in support of his anti-christian views. While he has sufficient candour to give praying men credit for sincerity and piety, he pities them for ascribing to the special interposition of the Supreme Governor that which is solely attributable to the inflexible laws of nature. We neither overlook nor deny the Divine axiom, that the "understanding of God is infinite." Consequently, He cannot need to be informed of the state and desires of His creatures. Nor is importunity necessary to dispose Him to be benevolently inclined towards us. God is love. He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. But it is revealed in His word, that it is better to confer certain favours conditionally, than to bestow them indiscriminately and unconditionally. If it were consistent with the Divine perfections, God could pardon our sins, regenerate our souls, supply us with daily communications of grace, and ultimately receive us into heaven, without our asking a single favour at His hands. But this is certainly not the mode of God's dealing with man. Does the Lord promise some great good to His

Church? It is conditionally. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) On this passage the celebrated Dr. Clarke says, "Who shall have such blessings? We say, they that pray, that seek earnestly, that strive to enter in at the strait gate. 'Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.' Neither Jew nor Gentile shall be thus saved who does not earnestly pray to God; and for this thing; for this complete salvation; this setting up of the kingdom of Christ on earth, and particularly in his own soul." To secure temporal blessings, the use of appropriate means is indispensable. To secure spiritual blessings, it is no less necessary to employ evangelical instrumentalities.

The necessity of prayer is taught with peculiar perspicuity and directness by the apostle James, iv. 2, 3: "Ye have not because ye ask not." If it were the will of God to give, independently of our asking, blessings would be conferred whether we ask for them or not. But the apostle here, in language which we cannot misunderstand, attributes the withholding of good to the neglect of prayer; or, as St. James adds, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." The argument, therefore, is conclusive that prayer—sincere, earnest, believing prayer—is indispensable to salvation. If the reason for this arrangement lies beyond the range of our comprehension, we may, nevertheless, assent to the arrangement itself with a firm belief. Not the least shock is given to intelligent faith, by the doctrine which teaches that the richest blessings are in reserve for the humble, prayerful soul; but are withheld from those who refuse to approach the throne of grace in the spirit of fervent and devout supplication. No judicious parent predetermines an inflexible course of

treatment towards his children, irrespective of their conduct towards himself. In instances innumerable parental favours are bestowed as a reward for filial piety; while, on the other hand, kindred expressions of love and approval are forfeited by filial disobedience. Nor does any sensible person condemn such a mode of treating children, as an infringement of domestic law. Parents have a natural claim to the affection, reverence, and obedience of their offspring. If these claims are cheerfully and promptly responded to, it is meet and right that children thus dutiful should enjoy some strong manifestation of parental regard and complacency. But if they are wayward, unthankful, and rebellious, it is equally proper that they should experience some unmistakable token of parental displeasure.

Now, God is our heavenly Father, and we are His offspring. We have destroyed ourselves; but He has replaced us all in a salvable state. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." God, therefore, has an indisputable right to our supreme love, trust, and obedience. He graciously instructs us to seek His face, and to call upon Him in spirit and in truth; and promises to hear in heaven his dwelling-place, and to forgive our sins. Consequently, if we conform to His will—not on the ground of our own merit, but on the ground of His love and faithfulness—we have a right to expect His saving blessing. But if we copy the wicked example of the prodigal son, it is just that we suffer our heavenly Father's displeasure. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW PRAYER OUGHT TO BE PERFORMED.

I. Avoid 1. Glaring improprieties, 2. A profuse use of poetry, 3. The habit of making indiscreet or misquotations from the Bible, 4. Vain repetitions, 5. Technicalities and display, 6. Compliments, 7. Refrain from making long prayers. Several evils arising out of long prayers noticed. Pray 1. Collectedly, 2. Sincerely, 3. Intelligently, 4. Consistently, 5. Reverently, 6. Submissively, 7. Fervently, 8. Pray in faith.

"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."—
1 Cor. xiv. 15.

PRAYER abstractedly considered is one thing, the manner of praying is another thing. In dead, formal prayer there is no efficacy. It is worse than a useless performance. It is positively wicked. It is a solemn mockery—a presumptuous insult to God, and trifling with sacred things. The superstitious monk in his dreary cell may rise to prayer at every hour of the night—the silly nun in her dreary convent may scrupulously repeat her Ave Maria (hail Mary) at early dawn and sun-set—the pharisee may love to pray standing in the market-place and at the corners of the streets, and contrive to be overtaken there by the canonical hour of prayer; the hireling may draw nigh to God with his mouth in the pulpit; the hypocrite may honour God with his lips, in the prayer-meeting, but they are all vain repetitions, without the homage of the heart. "The prayer of the wicked is sin." Nor do we know how to pray, or what to pray for, unless the Spirit help our infirmities. How needful then it is to humbly and believingly ask the Lord to teach us to pray. This assistance

He will vouchsafe, by His word and Spirit, to all His teachable disciples. On the important subject of prayer the Holy Scriptures are fraught with definite and circumstantial instruction. In the spirit of one who sincerely desires information, do you ask, how shall I present my prayers to God? We reply, first, negatively :—

1. *Avoid glaring improprieties.* Such for example as awkward, unnatural tones of voice. (2.) Excessive loudness. Recollect that sound is not the Scriptural standard of either earnestness or genuine piety. It is a mere physical effort. Faith, love, and holiness can neither be measured nor weighed by finely adjusted organs of speech nor strength of muscle. 3. Improper expressions such as studied quaintness, unintelligible phrases, vain repetitions, censorious remarks, abrupt conclusions at the top of the voice, which has the appearance of some unworthy design. To be invited to the mercy-seat to hold conference with God is an astonishing privilege. Let not this privilege be abused under any pretence.

2. *Avoid a profuse use of poetry in prayer.* Such a habit may be regarded with admiration by persons who prefer harmony and rhyme to good sense and profound piety. But a person of intelligent religion and discriminating zeal, will neither offer poetical prayers himself, nor countenance the use of them by others. To an occasional expression of thought in metrical terms, we offer no objection. It is the too frequent and indiscreet use of poetical recitation that we condemn. In opposition to our views it may be urged that the Psalms of David are poetical compositions, yet it is said of them, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” True. But the sweet singer of Israel was inspired. He wrote, and prayed, and sang, as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

In the same exalted sense, Milton, Young, Watts, and Wesley were not inspired—neither are those persons inspired who delight to decorate their prayers with gems and scraps borrowed from Christian bards. Do not imitate their example.

3. *Do not fall into the loose and injurious habit of making irrelevant or inaccurate quotations from the Bible.*

In the employment of scriptural phraseology, in prayer, there is a peculiar propriety. Its holy fire, its powerful energy, its pointed and comprehensive sentiments, and its sacred impress render it pre-eminently suitable for devotional exercises. “How cold and dead,” says Addison, “is a prayer composed in the most elegant forms of speech, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase which may be drawn from the sacred writings.” But we must not suppose that every description and form of Biblical expression can be appropriately employed in prayer. With pain of mind we have often heard injudiciously-selected passages cited, and the meaning of the most appropriate texts injured, or completely destroyed, by misquotation. It would be an easy thing to furnish a long list of examples; but we forbear, lest we should be thought too personal. Let it suffice to say, such inaccuracies betray an inexcusable absence of thought and discrimination. If a man has not judgment to guide his selections of scripture phraseology, or recollection to cite them faithfully, he should not quote them at random. If he will “read, mark, and inwardly digest” the word of God, this will do more towards correcting the faults of which we complain, than any exposures which we are able to make, or any rules which we can lay down for his guidance.

4. *Use not vain repetitions.* On this subject Jesus Christ says, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions

as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Matt vi. 7.) Numerous examples of the fault which our Lord here condemns might be collected from false systems of religion. The prayers of heathen Rome, the Mohammedans, the Hindoos, and Roman Catholics abound with vain repetitions. "It was a maxim among the Jews, that he who multiplies prayer must be heard." In the Liturgies of certain Protestant churches we meet with a great deal of tautology, which looks much like vain repetitions. The same may be said of many extempore prayers. But all repetitions are not vain. "A frequent repetition of awful and striking words," says Dr. A. Clarke, "may often be the result of earnestness and fervour." In confirmation of this sentiment he cites Dan. ix. 3—19. To the sincere, fervent suppliant, whether he employs a constant variety of phrases or frequent utterances of the same expressions, God will propitiously listen. But the man who satisfies himself with the mere multiplication of words, or with repeating a given form of prayer many times over, shall be sent empty away.

5. *Avoid everything, whether in manner or expression, which looks like affectation and display.* "The least artificial mode of uttering our thoughts in prayer is the best. True prayer admits of no brilliant witticisms. Studied ornament it rejects with disdain. He who feels interested in prayer will forget all critical and elaborate phraseology. And it is an infelicity to be deplored, rather than an excellency to be admired, when ingenuity of thought or surprising brilliancy of expression catches and keeps off the attention from devotion." No inflation of style, no attempts at grandeur are discoverable in the prayers of the Bible. Moses, the man of God, who had received a princely

education, and was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, had too much good sense and piety to swell and sparkle in his solemn addresses to heaven. In fervent prayer for the recovery of his leprous sister Miriam, with his characteristic meekness he prays, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." Here is no princely glitter or scholastic display. The fervent desire of the soul is expressed in a few plain, sensible terms. The same may be said of the prayers of the prophet Elijah. When he pleaded with God for the resuscitation of the widow's son, he said; "O Lord, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again." And in the present day, are not the greatest men generally, if not uniformly, distinguished for the simplicity and plainness of their devotional language?

In pulpit prayer especially, the preacher should guard against *rhetorical flourishes*. "Your language in prayer," says Dr. E. Porter, "should possess, in the first place, simplicity. It scarcely need be said that I do not mean vulgarity. There is another danger, to which I do not say educated, but half-educated men, are much more liable, and from which very respectable ministers are not wholly free; I mean the ostentation of a learned phraseology. Sometimes this appears in long and sounding words; sometimes in elegant structure of sentences; sometimes in vivid rhetorical figures." Again he lifts his warning voice and says, "Avoid scholastic exactness. It is a real fault to violate grammar in prayer; but a much greater one, to speak to your Maker in such a kind of air, as to remind your fellow-worshippers, continually, that you have not only studied syntax, but are familiar with the canons of rhetoric. The sacrifices of God are not pomp nor accuracy of language, but a broken spirit." The acceptability and efficacy of prayer are not regulated by a

fluent utterance. Thoughts and emotions are more important than a rapid flow of words. God does not so much regard the volubility of the tongue, as the state of the heart. "The eloquence of prayer," says Dr. A. Clarke, "consists in the fervency of desire, and the simplicity of faith. The abundance of fine thoughts, studied and vehement motions, and the order and politeness of the expressions, are things which compose a mere human harangue, not a humble and Christian prayer. Our trust and confidence should proceed from that which God is able to do in us, and not from what we say to Him."

Sometimes in prayer thoughts flow freely in an orderly succession; with equal readiness appropriate words occur to the recollection, so that the devout worshipper experiences no difficulty in giving fluent expression to the sentiments of his heart. Then he congratulates himself on the happy season which he has enjoyed at the throne of grace. At other times he feels straitened in spirit—wrapped in a thick cloud—his thoughts are confused and irregular—he is at a loss for words to give utterance to the deep and intense feelings of his soul. The enemy rushes in upon him like a flood, and overwhelms him with manifold temptations. Then he trembles with fear—feels ashamed of his weak performance, and perhaps writes bitter things against himself without cause. But why should he be dismayed? The success of his prayers does not depend on the absence of satanic influence, the healthy circulation of his animal fluids, the orderly activity of his brain, and agility of his tongue. Does he worship the Father in spirit and in truth? Then verily God hears him, and will put strength into his soul. At the throne of grace, simplicity, earnestness, and faith, are *always* prevalent; while mere artistic arrangement of eloquent

sentences is religious mockery, and, of course, labour in vain.

6. *Avoid compliments in prayer.* In our ordinary intercourse with mankind, we should carefully distinguish between deserved praise, and hypocritical flattery. Honour all men. Commend meritorious deeds. Encourage the deserving. But never descend so low as to violate your conscience by pandering to men's weaknesses or vices, that you may have an opportunity of laughing at their follies, or of profiting by their patronage. Let conscientiousness and integrity be dearer to you than either diversion or gold. But if adulation is fulsome on ordinary occasions, and when man is conversing with his fellow-man, it is much more so when one person compliments another through the medium of what is called prayer. The questionable points of fashionable breeding and worldly politeness certainly ought not to be incorporated with our supplications to God for pardon and salvation. If we have received favours at the hands of a friend, it may be thought a very convenient and fitting opportunity to refer to such favours, and to express our own obligation and gratitude in prayer. But it would be far better and more becoming to acknowledge our sense of his kindness directly, at a suitable time. We have frequently perceived unpleasant feelings to rise in our minds, when we have heard ministers expatiate in prayer on the hospitalities of friends, or when friends have enlarged on the industry, fidelity, and success of a preacher. Occasional and prudent references to these things are not inconsistent with propriety; but frequent and prominent recurrences to them are calculated to do more harm than good. It is the remark of a great and good man, that "complimentary phrases in prayer, are in general the result of heathenism, hypocrisy, or ignorance."

7. *Guard against making long prayers.* In private, provided duty does not call in another direction, and to other employment, a person may remain in his closet and protract his intercourse with God for hours together. But at the family altar, or in the social circle, for very obvious reasons, his prayers should not be lengthy. The impropriety of long prayers in public will appear if we consider—

(1.) *That none of the prayers of the Bible are very lengthy.* Many of them are remarkably short, consisting of only a few of the most direct and simple forms of expression. Moses pleading for the recovery of his leprous sister—Elijah, for the restoration of the widow's son to life—the blind beggar, for the recovery of his sight—the Syrophenecian woman, for her afflicted daughter—the publican, for mercy—in a few plain but energetic terms, made their requests known unto God. And even the prayers of Solomon, Daniel, and Nehemiah, which were offered on great public occasions, may be repeated deliberately in a few minutes. The weight of biblical example is consequently opposed to lengthy prayers.

(2.) *Long prayers in the Jewish Church were the result of religious declension.* As the spirit of true and solid piety decayed, human invention contrived tedious, dead formalities, magnified their importance, and attributed to them extraordinary influence. Vain repetitions and much speaking were substituted for true and spiritual worship. In other instances long prayers were used as a cloak, to disguise the grossest wickedness. “Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” (Matt. xxiii. 14.) The pharisees, says Whitby, “were in vogue for their long

prayers, which they continued sometimes *three hours*." These long-continued prayers were not acts of devotion, but mere religious performances under false pretences. They were anxious to be thought righteous and holy men, while they were guilty of ambition, covetousness, and oppression. Josephus, the Jewish historian, was a pharisee, and will not, therefore, be suspected of unfavourably representing his co-religionists. But he accuses them of political intrigues, and of exercising sovereign authority, under the reign of Queen Alexandra. "These pharisees artfully insinuated themselves into her favour, by little and little, and became themselves the real administrators of public affairs: they banished and reduced whom they pleased; they bound and loosed (men) at their pleasure; and, to say all at once, they had the enjoyment of royal authority, while the expenses and the difficulties of it belonged to Alexandra. (Wars, b. i., c. v., § 1—3.) For pharisaical oppression and cruelty, "long prayers" were a very unsatisfactory compensation.

(3.) *In the Christian Church, prayers of undue length, are traceable to the same cause—religious declension.* In the New Testament we meet not either with a cumbersome liturgy, or a single prayer extended to a great length. The Lord's prayer, so called, was given by our Lord, to His disciples, as a piece of instruction. But while it is incomparably rich in sentiment, it is distinguished for verbal simplicity and brevity. The points which it embraces are many—the words employed are few. The examples of Christ accorded with His precepts. None of the prayers which the New Testament attributes to Him are of great length. "But as the primitive simplicity of the gospel passed away, and the forms of devotion were again substituted for its power, the external rites of wor-

ship were extended in number and length. From the fifth to the tenth century, while the Church was losing the spirit of piety, she was increasing in the ceremonies and formalities of worship. Clerical ambition aiming at the debasement of the people, not only discouraged the study of the Scriptures in private, but suspended the reading of them in public. At length clerical indolence and ignorance gave up preaching too, and all public exposition of the Scriptures. The inferior clergy devoted the seasons of public worship to saying mass; while the Pope and his Cardinals were engrossed with the management of state affairs. Thus, for many centuries, both in the Romish and the Greek Churches, the great business of the Christian ministry, namely, to preach the Gospel, has been given up; and, except so far as the spirit of the Reformation has compelled these degenerate churches to a different course, "Deluded men have been led to place their hopes of heaven not on their knowledge or love of the truth, but on the number and length of their prayers."—Dr. E. Porter.

(4.) *Long prayers have a tendency to fatigue the mind, and to indispose it for steady, fervent devotion.* Let a sensible, warm-hearted Christian engage in prayer, in a social circle, or a public assembly. For a brief time his fellow-worshippers cordially accompany him, and feel blessed under his fervent appeals to the throne of grace; but if, instead of concluding his prayer within a reasonable time, he starts off again and again in a different direction, or to retrace the ground which he had traversed already, they become wearied, and the flame of devotion languishes. He may feel very well himself, and perhaps never suspect that he has exhausted the patience of his hearers. But it is impossible for him to edify them, if

they be impatiently waiting for his concluding sentence. It is worse still, if it be necessary to give him a signal to draw his prayer to a close. It is much to be regretted that good men, who possess talents for edifying social prayer-meetings, so frequently depress them by the injudicious length of their services. Whitfield once rebuked a person, saying, "You prayed me into a good frame, and you prayed me out of it."

(5.) *Long prayers either entirely prevent kneeling, or render such a posture painful.* If some persons consider that a little bodily torture is friendly to the spirit of devotion, we question the correctness of the sentiment. Pain diverts attention and creates restlessness. And we know of instances when persons have been pushed to the verge of fainting, by being kept too long on their knees during tedious prayers. Precisely how long a person ought to pray in public it is difficult to determine. The occasion, the number of persons present who are qualified to take part in the service, the accommodation which the place affords for convenient kneeling, and the mental habits of the people, are all entitled to consideration. A prayer which would be regarded as condensed and short in some public assemblies, would be considered injuriously long in a Primitive Methodist prayer-meeting. And it is with a special view to these services that our remarks are offered. Other communities will judge and decide for themselves. But having worshipped with the Primitive Methodists during forty years, we have no hesitation in saying, that among them, at least, many short prayers, by different persons, are more acceptable and edifying, than a few prayers extended to a great length. Of course no man should pray by the clock, and regulate the extent of his addresses to God, by the minute hand. But a prudent regard to

time is highly conducive to social edification. Having noticed some of the common improprieties in prayer which ought to be avoided, we now proceed to point out some of the features by which this holy duty ought to be characterized.

1. *Pray collectedly.* It will not unfrequently require discreet and resolute efforts to collect your vagrant thoughts and fix them steadily on proper objects during prayer. Without constant watchfulness they will start aside like a deceitful bow. Mere lip service will avail nothing. God requires the homage of your intellect and affections, as well as the praises of the tongue. If your mind wanders during the hour of prayer, recal your stray thoughts and give them a right direction. In this momentous business, by the help of God, your own habitual resolution may do much. The human will possesses great moral force. What brilliant victories are won by steady persevering determination, while nothing great and glorious is achieved by indecision and inertia. If a man thinks he can do nothing he will not *try* his powers. He throws himself, like a log of wood, in the drifting current, and puts forth no effort to resist the stream. He kneels down and begins to pray—he gets off his guard—mental dissipation attracts and scatters his thoughts among objects which have no relation to religious worship. In a few seconds he recovers from his reverie, and is surprised to find that, although his body is in a praying attitude, his soul is as far from the throne of grace as the east is from the west. To remedy this distracting evil, whenever you draw near to God for the purpose of prayer, devoutly lift up your soul to Him in the following appropriate aspirations:—

"The praying spirit breathe,
The watching power impart;
From all entanglements beneath,
Call off my wand'ring heart."

2. *Pray sincerely.* Whenever we approach the throne of grace, we ought to concentrate our attention, that our hearts may accompany our lips. To think and wait on God in our inmost soul is a very different thing from calling on him with an audible voice. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." But every soul that truly waits on God shall renew its strength. Whenever, therefore, we prepare to commune with our heavenly Father we should cherish in our hearts the devout sentiment of the Psalmist: "My soul! wait thou only on God." If prayer be offered to God from any selfish considerations, it cannot be acceptable. On the contrary, it is positively sinful, and exposes the hypocrite to severer punishment than that to which he would be liable were he not to pray at all. "Woe to you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." Matt. xxiii. 14. In the absence of heartfelt veneration for God, the most eloquent prayers will fail to secure His propitious attention. He has told us that He requires truth in the inward parts, and it is impossible to impose on him by counterfeit devotion. To the ungodly Jews the Lord says, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear." Isaiah i. 15. Hence we learn that the prayers of impenitent sinners are an abomination to the Lord. To use prayer as a cloak to conceal some sinister design, is one of the most aggravated sins of which a man can be guilty. The harassing and

bloody persecutions in which Saul of Tarsus took so active a part were highly criminal in the sight of God ; but so far as he was concerned their moral turpitude was modified by his sincerity. If he did evil he meant well. The hypocrite apparently does well while he means ill ; but when prayers are offered in sincerity, conscience dictates and approves of what the lips express.

3. *Pray intelligently.* Prayer being a reasonable service, it requires the exercise of the understanding as well as of the heart. If the light of the intellect be extinguished, the heart may be sincere ; but it will lie open to the grossest superstition and folly. It is stated by travellers that the Calmuc Tartars suppose that the success of prayer depends on *motion*, and that it is indifferent whether prayers are uttered by the mouth or moved by mechanism. With a view therefore to relieve themselves of the trouble or inconvenience of repeating prayers, they write them on slips of paper, and attach them to the sails of windmills, and then set them in motion with a current of air. The next improvement perhaps will be to pray by steam ! In the Roman Catholic Church views equally false and absurd are held by millions of her deluded members. They are systematically and assiduously taught to believe that "they shall be heard for their much speaking." Special advantages are promised them by their blind guides, on condition that they will repeat specific prayers a certain number of times, within a given period. To aid them in keeping accurate reckonings, they are encouraged to use a string of beads, one of which they remove at the end of every repetition. When the task is performed, the stupid devotee considers himself entitled to the promised blessings. On the same principle, in this country, before the Reformation, dying persons very commonly bequeathed

large legacies to the clergy, in exchange for prayers which it was believed would help their souls out of an imaginary place called purgatory. By these impious frauds, "vain repetitions," in the form of prayers, were converted into articles of spiritual merchandise, which brought immense wealth into the coffers of an avaricious priesthood.

But Christians of an evangelical creed and fervent piety are liable to relapse into a dead, formal condition. Let the reader ponder well the following simple, but instructive verses on mental vagrancy.

"I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?
Or do the wishes of my heart
Suggest the words I say?

I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone."

Prayers on slips of paper to which a rotatory motion is given by a breeze of wind—prayers enumerated by a tangible arithmetic in the form of a bead-roll—stereotyped petitions uttered in accordance with an inflexible liturgy, or spontaneous aspirations offered to God, which are neither felt by the heart nor comprehended by the understanding—is not rational worship, but stupid superstition.

4. *Pray consistently.* The subjects of prayer should be diversified and regulated by the circumstances of the occasion. A prayer embracing a considerable variety of topics is quite appropriate for the pulpit, especially before the sermon. Seasonable and profitable references may, and indeed ought, to be made to the discourse in the concluding prayer. But many particulars may be discreetly introduced in prayers associated with a preaching service, which would

be out of place on many other occasions. In a large assembly there is always a great variety of character and condition, both temporally and spiritually—a number of lovely, cheerful children, rejoicing, they know not why, in a happy existence—charming youths of both sexes buoyant with expectation of sublunary good—family men, surrounded by the cares of a household, contending with the difficulties of business, and toiling for the bread that perisheth—disconsolate widows and orphan children mourning the loss of their husbands and fathers—sorrowful spirits pining in secret grief—disciples in heaviness through manifold temptation—sinners whose consciences are seared with a hot iron—broken and contrite hearts, whose inmost souls are overwhelmed with penitential sorrow—lukewarm professors at ease in Zion—energetic Christians working out their salvation with fear and trembling—all these varied characters are frequently in the same congregation. On special occasions the emotions of an assembly are unusually excited by extraordinary events. Beyond the pale of the congregation the field is boundless, and everywhere presents affecting circumstances for appropriate notice at the throne of grace. For these reasons the leading prayer of pulpit services should be general and comprehensive, though not too lengthy.

Such prayers, however, would be very improper on less public occasions. In prayer-meetings where several persons are qualified and expected to engage in the exercise, prayers should embrace but few subjects, and be very short. But fervent petitions for the immediate and continuous revival of God's work should never be omitted. In class-meetings the members should plead especially for each others' preservation in the way to heaven, spiritual enlightenment, comfort, and growth in grace. They should also

earnestly wrestle with God for an accession of converted, holy members to the Church of Christ. At the domestic altar the interests of the family in general, and the respective branches thereof in particular, claim special attention. But other subjects, of course, are entitled to sympathetic regard. In the closet we may make prayer and supplication for all men; but it is here especially that we find a retreat from the turmoil and intrusions of the world, and the most appropriate opportunity for secret communion with our heavenly Father on things which belong to our own individual peace. At the baptismal font the contaminating effects of sin—the world-wide diffusion of this moral pestilence—the absolute necessity of holiness as a qualification for heaven—the abundant and effectual provision which is made for the purification of our nature through the mediation of Christ—the obligation of parents to train up their children in the way they should go—the encouragement which the Scriptures afford to those who discharge this duty faithfully—are proper themes of prayer and thanksgiving suggested by this interesting rite. At funerals the universal prevalence of sin in the family of Adam—its dreadful ravages by sickness and death—the vanity of all earthly things—the anguish of bereaved relatives and friends—the certainty of dissolution—the precariousness of life—the necessity of being constantly prepared to meet God—the resurrection of the dead—and the final judgment—all these intensely affecting realities claim our gravest attention on these solemn occasions. At the communion table the dreadful evil of sin—its fearful demerits—the infinite compassion of God towards His wayward human family—the boundless love of Christ, in substitutionally bearing our sins in His own body on the accursed tree—our complete spiritual destitution—the

ample provision made for us by the sacrificial death of our Saviour—His second advent to collect His scattered disciples and to re-ascend with them to heaven—should awaken our liveliest gratitude, and form the subjects of our devout meditations. In the apartments of the sick the scope of prayer is comparatively circumscribed. Our army and navy—our Sovereign and senators—our husbandry and commerce—the weather and the crops—with many kindred topics, would be very improper to introduce in prayer at the bedside of the afflicted. The visitation is ostensibly for the special benefit of the patient. Consequently, if we would pray consistently, his family connexions—the nature of his disease—his moral state and spiritual welfare must concentrate our solicitude for his special instruction, comfort, and edification.

5. *Pray reverently.* Two considerations suggest the gross impropriety of conducting ourselves irreverently at the mercy-seat.

(1.) *God is infinitely great.* None by searching can find out the Almighty to perfection. He is from everlasting to everlasting, the self-existing, independent Jehovah. He created all things out of nothing. He sustains all things and governs all things. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. But what is man? Contrasted with the inferior creatures he is but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour; and all things are under his feet. But compared with God, he is but of yesterday, and knows nothing. “Lord,” says the Psalmist, “make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee. Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” The inspired penman

was at a loss for suitable words to express fully the insignificance of man in the presence of Almighty God.

(2.) *God is essentially, perfectly, and immutably holy.* He therefore loves holiness and hates iniquity in His intelligent creatures. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with indifference, much less with complacency. But man by nature is altogether an unclean thing, thoroughly polluted from the crown of his head even to the sole of his foot. "The heavens are not clean in God's sight: how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" Even the purity of the most distinguished Christians is inconceivably surpassed by the infinite holiness of God, as stars of the first magnitude are totally eclipsed by the superior splendour of the sun. Whenever, therefore, we prepare to draw near to God, we ought to be clothed with humility, and our addresses should be characterized by the profoundest reverence. If we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, this boldness must ever be tempered with humility. If we desire to present a petition to a fellow-man, of a rank more elevated than our own, we naturally and properly endeavour to approach him with becoming respect. And shall we show less regard for the King of kings than we manifest towards a mortal man? Surely not. "Serve the Lord with fear," says the Psalmist, "and rejoice with trembling." And again, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all them that are about Him. Holy and reverent is His name." When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, as Moses approached to see the strange sight, the Lord said unto him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground." And whenever we commune with the

high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, let us do so with reverence and godly fear. The nature of Christianity, the appointed medium of access to God the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and the precepts of the New Testament unitedly instruct us to conduct ourselves with the deepest humility in the presence of God. Man's original right of immediate access to God was forfeited by transgression. It is restored by Jesus Christ. Without the divinely appointed Mediator the door of mercy would be closed. The self-righteous Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, was sent empty away. The publican, who acknowledged his guilt, and pleaded for mercy, "went down to his house justified." These instructive events were not anomalies in the kingdom of God, but in strict harmony with His revealed will. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Liberty to "come boldly to the throne of grace" is no warrant for using that familiarity of language in our addresses to God, which is becoming only in conference with an equal. This gross impropriety has not unfrequently occasioned pain of mind to the well-regulated feelings of sensible and devout Christians. Zealous and ignorant fanatics, as might be expected, rather glory in their effrontery, than feel ashamed of any irreverent expressions which they may have uttered inadvertently. As to designing impostors, they are sometimes lost to all sense of decency in their counterfeit prayers. A certain notorious self-styled revivalist conducted himself with so much impertinence in his prayers during family worship, that when he rose from his knees, his pious host gave him a gentle admonition. Probably the man secretly felt

that he had rather over-acted his part, but he attempted to justify his outrageous behaviour by pleading, that "when persons lived near to God, they might use great familiarity with Him in prayer." The maintenance of decency and order require that on such men silence should be imposed in the Churches. Their indecorous behaviour, if not restrained, might contaminate humble, genuine Christians. "A *solemn* AWE of the Divine Majesty is not less requisite to successful praying, than *faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ. He who knows he has sinned, and feels that he is less than the least of God's mercies, will pray with the deepest humility." The singularly near and honourable relation in which the father of the faithful stood to his Maker, entitled him to greater familiarity than that which we can reasonably claim. But when he interceded for Sodom, he acknowledged himself to be "but dust and ashes," and intreated God not to be angry with him for presuming to plead for mercy in behalf of the devoted city. If Moses sometimes used great freedom of speech in his prayers to God, it ought to be recollected that he was honoured with a divine commission, to which was attached peculiar privileges. "The LORD talked with Moses," and "spake unto him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Exod. xxxiii. 9—11.) When you receive a commission from God similar to that of Moses, you may adopt his familiar style of address in prayer. Till then, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few." (Eccles. v. 2.)

6. *Pray submissively.* The propriety of praying with submission to the supreme and unerring will of God will appear if we consider—(1.) That the mind of God, on a

multitude of subjects which ought to engage our prayerful solicitude, is not revealed. (2.) Without the assistance of the Holy Spirit "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." (Rom. viii. 26.) (3.) So limited is our knowledge, and so fallacious are appearances, that we are incapable of choosing invariably what is good for ourselves. "For who knoweth what is good for a man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" (Eccles. vi. 12.) (4.) The agonizing prayer of Christ was offered up in a spirit of complete resignation. He "kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." (Luke xxii. 41, 42.) The dreadful cup was not removed, but His human nature was strengthened by an angel, and enabled to endure the conflict. From these facts we learn that for persevering importunity, which will take no denial, on every occasion, the Bible furnishes no authority. However earnestly we may desire temporal prosperity, the life and health of ourselves and family connexions, yet recollecting our own ignorance as to what is really the best for us, and the infinite wisdom and benevolence of our heavenly Father, it is our obvious duty to make our requests known unto Him, with complete resignation to His sovereign pleasure. It is safer to commit ourselves and our affairs to the disposal of the Lord, than to choose and carve for ourselves. "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." God is invariably gracious to those who love and serve Him, whether He grants or denies their requests. Parents often see it necessary to thwart the wishes of their children, and consequently refuse to gratify their desires. In like manner our

heavenly Father frequently sees it to be expedient to withhold the favours which we desire, and He acts accordingly. Apples of gold are not always presented in baskets of silver. Inestimable presents are sent us in rough packages, and attractive calamities are mercifully placed beyond our reach. The Lord is—

“Good when he gives—supremely good;
Nor less when he denies;
Even crosses from his sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.”

“If ye ask and receive not,” says the apostle James, “it is because ye ask amiss.” What extravagant wishes parental affection cherishes towards children, and how often maternal ambition miscalculates what is good for her beloved offspring. Salome, the wife of Zebedee, put on our Lord’s spiritual promises to His apostles a literal interpretation, and coveted for her sons the highest dignities in His kingdom. “Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons (James and John) may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.” Then Jesus gave them to understand that He could not confer on any persons heavenly honours and rewards, on the principle of *favouritism*; but that the brightest distinctions in the celestial world will be awarded to those who are the best qualified to enjoy them. Be more anxious for the holiness of your children than for their preferment. If it be their

supreme delight to do the will of their heavenly Father, He will place them in the right position, and cause all things to work together for their good.

Rachel was inconsolable because she went childless. "Give me children," she said, "else I die." Her desire was not unnatural; but it was supported by a childish argument. She knew not what she asked. God gave her children, and she died in parturition. As a wife she might honourably wish for offspring, especially if she hoped to be the mother or ancestress of the promised Messiah; but she ought to have reflected, If I have no children God can "give me a name better than of sons and of daughters." (Isa. lvi. 5.) Many mothers do not live to nurse their children. Many children die in infancy, or, what is infinitely more distressing to a pious mind, at a mature age without religion. Others live to bring down the gray hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave. Saul, the apostate king of Israel, and the sons of Belial, who abused the Levite's concubine at Gibeah, were descendants of Jacob by Rachel! How often do we witness posterity dishonouring the good name of their ancestors, and living in open rebellion against God! In regard to any subject on which the mind of God is distinctly revealed, we ought not to "pray about it," with a pretended wish to know what is His will. In such a case prayer is affected ignorance, and counterfeit docility. Why ask God to tell you what He has told you plainly already? It is better not to pray at all, than to entreat the Lord to explain that which He has distinctly revealed. And in every case in which the mind of God is not known, prayer should be offered up with perfect resignation.

7.—*Pray fervently.* But what is holy fervour? It is not a boisterous fanaticism. It is not frantic gesticulations.

It is not grovelling prostrations and stupid "Hail Maries" offered to unconscious images, or to the absent spirit of a deceased Christian. It is not the simultaneous, but unfelt repetitions of stereotyped liturgies. What then is holy fervour? It is rational, evangelical earnestness. And are we not commanded to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord? It is not sufficient to offer unto God a few frozen prayers and lifeless acknowledgments. Our devotion should be instinct with holy fervour. The zeal of the Lord's house should eat us up. We are perfectly aware that, to some persons, vehement desires and lively expressions in prayer are fanatical and profane. In their judgment the spirit should be unexcited; ready-made prayers ought to be used, seasonable or unseasonable, as the vehicles of our aspirations—or our thoughts should be carefully selected, accurately arranged, and uttered with "a still small voice." They not very modestly imagine that the emotions which they have experienced in connection with devotion, are the proper standard by which all other professors of religion ought to regulate their religious feelings. They consider that within the pale of *their* church, piety is carried to the highest attainable pitch in the present life, and that all pretensions which surpass their experience, or which do not square with their measurements, are deviations from truth and propriety.

As for the systematical formalist, he hates life and power in religion, brands them with the opprobrious epithets of profanity, blasphemy, and madness, and wonders how it is that God does not express His displeasure, by showering down judgments on such wild disorder. In his own mode of worship he sees nothing but propriety, decorum, and beauty. In his neighbour's devotions he perceives nothing but fanaticism, presumption, and deformity.

Spiritually speaking, this is an optical illusion. An illiberal education, associated with an exclusive habit of mind, have planted in his breast inveterate prejudices, which have made him *purblind*. He has been taught, and accustomed to believe, that prayer should be regulated by exact number, weight, and measure; that mankind should know precisely *what* to say, *when* to say it, and *how* to say it. If holy emotions stir the depths of the soul, they must be suppressed or vigilantly guarded, at least, lest they appear on the surface of life, and degenerate into unauthorised enthusiasm. But a man whose soul is full of unutterable glory and of God—a man whose heart is glowing with sacred fire sent down from heaven—a man whose spirit is constrained by the love of Christ and the terrors of the Lord—cannot pause to regulate every gesture, every emotion, and every intonation of his voice in prayer, according to human rule and order. The power of godliness elevates him above these non-essentials. And it would be positively wrong to relax the tone of Christian fervour, and screw down his earnestness to the standard of his frosty-hearted accusers.

But do not misunderstand us. We plead not for anything extravagant and foolish. We do not say, as we once heard a fisherman say to his sister, who was earnestly seeking salvation, “Shout! for I see all is done by shouting.” Neither do we condemn the quiet worshipper, whose life adorns the gospel of our Saviour. And we here record our protestation against the fanaticism or hypocrisy of those who thump with the fist, and stamp with the foot, while their garments are “spotted by the flesh.” There may be loud vociferations and violent contortions of the body, where there is no enlightened religious fervour. And there may be much earnestness of soul in connection

with a subdued tone of prayer. The gently falling snow, as well as the driving rain, refreshes the earth and promotes vegetation. But the Scriptures attach great importance to warm, earnest devotion. It is "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much." James v. 16. All the favourable answers to prayer recorded in the word of God are such as were returned to fervent, believing supplication. This remark applies to prayer when offered with a view to different objects; but is especially applicable to prayers which were offered for the renovation of the heart. For examples of this kind, witness the penitential Psalms of David, the prayer of Saul of Tarsus, the publican in the temple, and the repentant thief upon the cross. Nor can it be proved that earnestness is unnecessary, so long as it is written, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The prayerful fervour of John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, not less than his undaunted courage in reproving sin, struck terror into his popish adversaries. With strong crying and tears he wrestled with God for the salvation of his country from the trammels of Rome. The papal Queen of Scots declared that she would rather face an army of twenty thousand men, than the prayers of John Knox. And it was certainly in answer to the importunity of David, that God turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, by which a strong conspiracy was suddenly repressed. What a striking example we have of earnest, persevering prayer in Jacob. He wrestled with an angel till the break of day. This personage was doubtless the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, who assumed the appearance of a man. When the morning twilight began to appear, the angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." But Jacob said, "I will not let thee

go except thou bless me." Faith and importunity prevailed, and the victorious patriarch went on his way rejoicing.

8. *Pray in faith.* Faith is absolutely necessary to success. "Without faith it is impossible to please God : for he that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." He must be fully persuaded in his own mind that there is an unoriginated, a self-existent, and an eternal, infinite Being, possessing such attributes as those which are ascribed to Him in the Holy Scriptures. He must steadfastly believe that the glorious perfections of Deity do not render Him indifferent to the moral conduct of His human family. That while He is angry with the wicked every day, He will abundantly bless those who call upon Him in spirit and in truth. He must believe that Jehovah is a living, personal, present God,—That He surely sees our affliction, hears our prayers, and is constantly ready and willing to afford us the mercy and help which we need. He must believe the testimony which God hath given of His Son—namely, that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the faithful and true Witness, the divinely appointed and only Mediator between God and Man,—that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man ; and that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For, "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

He must believe that creation, including both matter and mind, is governed not by fate, or a necessary chain of causes and effects—but by an infinite, intelligent, personal Creator, who directs, or modifies, or suspends the operations of physical laws, according to the good pleasure of

His will ; and that He has often arrested the ordinary course of nature, and impressed it with an extraordinary impulse in answer to prayer. And what God hath done, He can do again. Excepting cases which involve a contradiction, all things are possible to God. Unbelief wonderingly enquires, "How can these things be?" Faith calmly replies, "Thus it is written, and therefore thus I believe." Did we possess every qualification for prayer, faith excepted, we should plead and weep in vain. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like the wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." James i. 5-7. This is a strong representation of the unavailableness of unbelieving prayer. A man who presents such a prayer pursues no steady, confiding course. He is thrown backwards and forwards by alternate hope and fear, and has no solid basis on which to rest the fulcrum with which he tries to move the arm of God in his favour. Now examine another passage, which ascribes wonderful efficacy to faith. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them* and ye shall have *them*."—Mark xi. 24.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHERE WE OUGHT TO PRAY.

God is omnipresent. 1. We ought to pray mentally. 2. In our closets. Several reasons why. 3. At the domestic altar. This duty enforced by several arguments. 4. Excuses answered. 5. We ought to pray in the social circle. This duty urged by numerous considerations.

“ I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere.”—1 Tim. ii. 8.

As God is omnipresent, there is not a spot under heaven, where it is lawful to be, which is not a suitable place for prayer. Superstition and bigotry may deem it sinful to offer public prayer to God without the pale of certain localities. The ignorant and intolerant cannot see it to be right to perform religious worship in sanctuaries which do not belong to their own community. How often do we hear it asserted, and how often do we read in sectarian publications, that it is a holy duty to pray in a church belonging to the Establishment, but a wicked thing to pray in a dissenters' chapel. Men who hold and teach these narrow-minded and uncharitable sentiments, would do well to ponder the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman. “ The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain: but ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know

what we worship ; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John iv. 19-23. From this passage we learn that the *spirit* of prayer is of more consequence than the *place* of prayer. There are nevertheless some localities where we are commanded to pray, or where we may offer up prayer to God with peculiar advantage. As—

1. *In the retirement of our own hearts.* By mental abstraction a good man may so far withdraw his mind from the world, that while his hands are engaged with the affairs of this life, or he is in the presence of his fellow-men, he may enjoy secret conference and fellowship with God : and this, too, without attracting the notice of those by whom he is surrounded. The heart in which the love of God is shed abroad, has acquired the habit of communion with Him ; and in seasons of emergency it instinctively looks to Him with confiding hope for counsel and assistance. While Nehemiah, the Jewish patriot, was cup-bearer to the Persian monarch, he was informed of the sad desolations of Jerusalem, and of the great affliction and reproach of the remnant of his countrymen in Judea. This distressing intelligence greatly depressed his spirit. He mourned, he fasted, he prayed. From Chislue to Nissan, or November to March, although he shared the affluence and splendour of a court, he sighed and groaned for his suffering people. This protracted sorrow produced its natural effects on his physical system. It impressed his countenance with grief. In this unwonted state of mind, in his official capacity he entered into the presence of his royal master, and presented the cup to him. The sovereign perceived at once the visible change which had come over

his servant, and inquired, in a strain which bespoke mingled discernment and humanity, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." At this interrogation, Nehemiah, knowing the despotic character of the Persian sovereigns, "was sore afraid." Although he trembled with fear, he ventured to give a proverbial expression of his loyalty, and then stated that the cause of his grief was, "the place of his fathers' sepulchres lay waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire." Artaxerxes received this statement favourably, and said, "For what dost thou make request?" This was a critical moment. Mighty interests were at stake. Nehemiah felt his position, and would not presume to present his request to his earthly sovereign before he had implored the counsel of Jehovah. He says therefore, "I prayed to the God of heaven." It is scarcely credible that Nehemiah would throw himself into a praying attitude, or even utter an audible petition to Jehovah in the presence of the king. His prayer was undoubtedly mental. Quick as thought he addressed the aspirations of his soul to the King of kings, who made haste to help him, and granted him favour in the eyes of his royal master.

From the pious example of the Hebrew patriot, and the success with which it was attended, we ought to take encouragement, and go and do likewise. When we are called by Providence to experience any unexpected loss or bereavement, or to suffer any unmerited reproach and provocation—when we are suddenly assailed by temptation, let us instantly lift up our eyes to the hills whence cometh our help—to the Lord who made heaven and earth.

2. *In the closet.* Private prayer is positively enjoined by our Saviour. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter

into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Our Lord must not be understood in this passage, as offering any objection to public prayer, or social worship. These things we ought to do, and not to leave the duty here enjoined undone. Wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, He has promised to be in the midst of them. But the duty of social worship does not cancel our obligation to observe secret communion with God. The Greek term *Tameion*, which is rendered *closet*, signifies any secret place. Parkhurst derives the Greek word from the Hebrew *Tamen*, which signifies to *hide*, or to *cover up*. Hence by the closet we are to understand *privacy*. Isaac's closet was a field. He went out to meditate in the field at the eventide. Gen. xxiv. 63. David's closet was his bed-chamber. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." Psalm iv. 4. Peter's closet was upon the flat roof of the house of Simon the tanner. Acts x. 9. Our Lord's closet was a mountain. "When He had sent the multitude away, he went into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, He was there alone." Matt. xiv. 23. Nathaniel's closet was under the fig tree. For private devotion we can easily conceive many important reasons.

(1.) *It is a stronger and more unequivocal expression of faith in God, than are any public acts of devotion.* Have we not reason to fear that in numerous instances, persons attend places of worship, unite in singing the songs of Zion, enter into Christian communities, and either utter their own spontaneous prayers or recite the formal prayers of others, according to the custom of the religious assembly with which they mingle—from mere

worldly considerations? The heaviest loaf—the largest fish—the richest contribution to the “clothing club”—the most lucrative situation—the most liberal patronage—the highest respectability—these are the powerful magnets which draw tens of thousands to the sanctuary, and which engage them in external worship. Temporal interest is the object of their pursuits. “Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” Isa. lvi. 11. In the closet these secular allurements are not present. The door which shuts in the worshipper with God, shuts out the world. The soul is drawn into privacy by a heavenly influence. Here hypocrisy can make no parade—win no human applause—acquire no worldly gain. And the hypocrite is unwilling to serve God for his own sake. Religion with him is a mercenary scheme. Prayer to him is a mortifying penance—and a penance which he will not perform unless he is paid for it now with some kind of earthly good. And if he cannot discover how this good is obtainable by private devotion, he will neglect his closet till the hinges of the door be corroded with rust, and the walls be overgrown with mould. But “the true worshipper” has a vital, active faith in God. His eye is single. His motto is, glory to God alone. He really believes in the omnipresence, the infinite wisdom and goodness of his Maker. He therefore esteems it a precious privilege to worship his heavenly Father in secret. In the closet he digs for hidden treasure, and expects to find richer rewards than “this short-enduring world can give.”

(2.) *Retirement is extremely favourable to uninterrupted communion with God.* In a social prayer-meeting each believer is only an item of the assembly. He must have

his eyes and ears open to know what is going on. And whatever be his own peculiar wants and feelings, he must accompany the leaders of the service, in a greater or less degree, in their various exercises. Sometimes they conduct his thoughts far away from those points on which he desires to concentrate his special attention. Something seen or something heard incidentally, suggests ideas which have but little or no relation to pure worship. By these circumstances the current of his devotion is somewhat disturbed. But in the closet he has the devotion to himself. Here, he is admitted to a private audience with the King of kings. He is alone with his heavenly Father, secluded from the world, and quietly closeted with God. Here his spirit enjoys secret intercourse with the Father of spirits. And, as he thus honours God by reverential, earnest, and unaffected worship, God honours him with special marks of His favour. If the glory of his countenance, like that of Moses, when he had been in secret communion with the Almighty, does not shine with dazzling splendour to mortal vision, he has received a heavenly baptism which influences all his demeanour, and the people take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus.

(3). *In retirement, greater freedom of speech, as to the mode of our address, may be employed than what can be used discreetly in the social circle.* Whether we meet with a few select friends, or with a mixed congregation for purposes of worship, we instinctively feel the propriety of paying some regard to the sentiments, habits, and positions of those around us. This feeling imposes a degree of restraint, which we at once lay aside when we enter into our closets and shut the door. Here no human eye can see. No human ear can hear. No capricious mind can criticise. Here there is no fastidious soul to chill with a

disdainful smile. No vulgar persecutor to ridicule the solemnities of Divine worship. None but God is present. And He is present as a FATHER—to sympathise with His affectionate children—to pity them, to forgive their trespasses—to strengthen their hearts—to assure them of His love, and to encourage them to hold on their way.

(4). *In retirement we may bare our hearts before God without reserve.* In the presence of our fellow-creatures many thoughts are better unuttered than expressed. It would betray the grossest imprudence to reveal all we think and experience in the ear of a mortal man. In the home circle and the commercial office, a thousand things form the subjects of frank and open conversation, which are not proper for publicity; hence, if a neighbour or a customer drops in, the theme of discourse is suspended, and gives place to an immediate digression. The same principle applies to prayer. In company we ought to observe a prudent reserve. But reserve in the closet is folly, and a species of infidelity. It is impossible to conceal anything from the knowledge of God. We cannot therefore conceive any reason for attempting to conceal anything from Him, though we can easily see the propriety of entering into private communion with God with fear and trembling, if our consciences are stained with guilt. The closet is the only proper *confessional*. We can rehearse to God nothing but what He already knows. There we may pour out our most private complaints, and there we may prefer our most secret requests. Nothing which we say there will be divulged. Our disclosures, so to speak, which are strictly confidential, will never be whispered in another's ear. This assurance inspires trust and encourages us to approach with boldness the throne of grace.

(5.) *Closet prayer is a powerful preservative against*

apostasy. We have stated already that a hypocrite may keep up religious appearances from sinister motives; but in the absence of sincerity it is not likely that a man will regularly addict himself to private devotion. "No man," says Dr. A. Clarke, "ever backslided from the life and power of Christianity who continued constant and fervent, especially in private prayer. Apostasy begins in the closet." We must not, however, superstitiously attribute to the closet any abstract sanctity. Nor must we suppose that worship performed there can act as a charm, and infallibly secure for us the blessings which we need. The state of the heart is of infinitely greater consequence than the *place* where our prayers are offered. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

3. *Another proper place for prayer is at the domestic altar.* In patriarchal times the head of the family was the governor and priest of the household. In the brief historical notices which the Scriptures furnish of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Job, we have some beautiful and instructive examples of domestic worship. (Gen. viii. 20, xviii. 17—19, xxxv. 1—4, Job i. 5.) These examples ought to be copied universally. God ought to be worshipped daily in every family. Every head of a household should adopt the sentiment of the celebrated John Howe, "WHERE I HAVE A TENT, THERE GOD SHALL HAVE AN ALTAR." From the many and powerful reasons which might be advanced in favour of family worship we may notice the following:—

(1.) *The neglect of it cannot be harmonized with the obligations and prescribed duties of a Christian.* "I will," says the apostle Paul, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." 2 Tim. ii. 8. The same inspired writer enjoins parents to bring up their

children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It will not be questioned that such training includes habitual prayer; and family worship affords peculiarly advantageous opportunities for inculcating this duty on children and other juvenile members of a household. What opinion, then, must we form of a parent or head of a family, who suffers these opportunities to pass unimproved? His own house is his vine and fig-tree, beneath which he may, if he will, bow daily before the mercy-seat, surrounded by his household, and within the quiet of his own dwelling offer up to God the sacrifice of praise, and plead for a continuation of the Divine blessing. If he habitually omits to avail himself of these precious advantages, he practically denies the Christian faith.

(2.) *The youthful members of a family should be taught their duty to God, by example as well as by precept.* Children are instinctively very observant. Their ears and eyes are constantly attentive to what we say and do. They are very susceptible of impression. Events which pass unnoticed by persons of riper years impress them forcibly. Imitation is one of the strongest propensities of their nature. They confide implicitly in those whom they ardently love. Their rational faculties early begin to develop themselves, and in their way, they soon begin to reason. Now we know that without prayer salvation can neither be acquired nor retained. But if children never hear their parents pray, they naturally conclude, either that prayer is not necessary to salvation, or that their parents are irreligious. To every guardian of little ones we would say, if you desire their salvation, do not only pray for them, but pray with them. Let them be eye and ear witnesses to your deep and holy solicitude for their everlasting welfare.

As a little boy sat looking at his mother one day, he said, "Grandpapa will be in heaven! Aunt will be in heaven! Mary will be in heaven! Baby is in heaven! But mamma"—Here the child paused and looked very sad.

"Well, dear," said the mother, "what about mamma? Will not mamma be in heaven?"

The little fellow shook his head very gravely, and replied, "Oh, no, no!"

"Why do you say so?" asked the mother, deeply affected.

"Oh, you do not pray," he replied, "so you will not go to heaven."

"Yes, my dear, I do," said the anxious mother. "I often pray for you when you do not see me—very often indeed."

"Ah," said the astonished child, "I never saw you then. Kneel down now, and let me hear if you can pray."

The mother knelt by her child and prayed aloud for herself and little one, and that day learned a lesson which she never forgot."

(3.) *If children are favoured with a secular and fashionable education without preceptive and exemplary piety on the part of their parents, there is reason to fear that they will early graduate in the colleges of vice and irreligion, and in maturer years be confirmed in the arts and sciences of ungodliness.* By nature they are prone to depart from the living God; and if this propensity be encouraged, rather than restrained by religious influence, no marvel if they live to dishonour and break the hearts of their parents. How can those parents who are ashamed of God's worship, or who neglect to acknowledge Him at the domestic altar, expect His blessing on their offspring? Or how dare they venture to hope, that a merely worldly system of

education will be crowned with a happy issue in the world to come? Will not those who sow the wind reap the whirlwind? If we wish that our sons may be (in the garden of God) as plants grown up in their youth, we must teach them something besides grammar, languages, and rhetoric. If we desire that our daughters may be as corner-stones (in the Christian temple,) polished after the similitude of a palace, we must give them lessons on other subjects than painting, music, and dancing. If a youth be devoted to the gospel ministry before he be consecrated to God—what infatuation! What an instance of ignorance and presumption! And what an awful reckoning will such parents have at the day of judgment. Holy orders cannot ensure a holy heart and a meetness for heaven. No vocation, however sacred, can supply the lack of religious training beneath the parental roof.—For family prayer there is no equally efficient substitute.

(4.) *Family prayer is the most powerful support of parental authority.* The reverence with which children regard their parents is regulated, in a great measure, by their estimate of their parents' moral character. If parents possess ordinary humanity, their offspring naturally love and trust them, in consequence of the habitual affection and kindness which they daily experience at their hands. But this filial veneration is vastly elevated and strengthened by the conviction that their parents are the sincere and faithful worshippers of Almighty God; and the higher opinion they form of their parents' moral character, the more readily they submit to parental government.

(5.) *Family prayer, prudently conducted, is powerfully calculated to impress the minds of the younger members of the household with sentiments favourable to religion.* This

is pre-eminently the case when wisely-selected portions of scripture are read in connection with prayer. We therefore urgently recommend this usage, whenever it is practicable. At family worship the parent is legitimately invested with the character of God's minister. As a father he is loved and honoured by the domestic circle, at the head of which he is placed by Providence; but he commands a still higher degree of reverence when he officiates as the minister of Christ. The Bible solemnly read, and prayer reverently offered by a parent, who is known to believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and the efficacy of prayer, and who "walks within his house in a perfect way," are means powerfully calculated to promote the salvation of the children.

(6.) Children should be taught to pray and believe in God for themselves. In the example and instruction of parents, and mothers especially, children repose almost unlimited confidence. In instances innumerable, if they do not act according to her pious example and known will, they nevertheless believe that what she commands and does is right. At an age when they do not know that there is such a science as logic, they are capable of reasoning with considerable skill. How naturally, and with what facility, can a little child blessed with a pious mother, construct the following argument: "My mother is a good woman; she loves and serves the Lord. But a mother who loves God will not say and do wrong: therefore what my mother says and does must be right." These sentiments are finely illustrated in the following anecdote:—

"What do you do without a mother to tell all your troubles to?" said a child who had a mother, to one whose mother was dead.

"Mother told me whom to go to before she died," answered the little orphan. "I go to the Lord Jesus; He was mother's friend, and He is mine."

"Jesus Christ is up in the sky," the other replied; "He is a way off, and has a great many things to attend to in heaven. It is not likely He can stop to mind you."

"I do not know about that," said the orphan; "all I know is, *He says He will, and that is enough for me.*"

Mothers, think on this. Train up your children in the way they should go; then, should it please God to bereave them of your maternal care, they will not readily forget your godly precepts and holy example.

Many other reasons might be assigned for family prayer; but for the sake of brevity, we pass on to notice,

4. A few excuses which are pleaded in justification of omitting this important duty.

1. Some plead the absence of a positive command to attend to family prayer. We admit that the scriptures do not definitely enjoin this duty, as distinct from other religious exercises; but many obvious duties are based not so much on positive precepts, as on inferential evidence. Duty is not to be learned from legal enactments exclusively. The great principles of the Bible, and the example of holy men, which the scriptures record with approval, as well as the plain commands of God, must be received as regulators of human conduct.

2. As an objection to this duty others plead their constitutional diffidence. If persons who urge this plea had not the confidence to speak face to face with their fellow-men, there would be some plausibility in the excuse. But when it is known that they can transact their secular business with composure and an easy address, we can

scarcely give them credit for their alleged want of confidence in regard to family prayer.

3. Others plead their inability to conduct domestic worship in an acceptable and edifying manner. To this plea we answer, reverence and sincerity are of infinitely more importance than eloquence, in the worship of God. Prayer is not a rhetorical performance, but devotion. Moderate talents, associated with sterling piety, are all that is requisite in a domestic chaplain. Moses was not eloquent, but he was mighty in prayer. (Exodus iv. 10.)

It may be a difficulty to establish prayer in the family, but the difficulty should be courageously encountered and overcome. During the recent great revival in America a young married man obtained salvation, and felt his soul inspired with that hope which maketh not ashamed. He resolved that he would acknowledge and honour Christ everywhere. The opportunity, the time, the place soon arrived. He was returning to his home in the evening. "Now," said he, "I must honour and obey God in my family. I must set up family worship."

"Oh, no," said the tempter, "not yet! Don't be in a hurry, take time. Get a little stronger, and then you can go on better."

"I must begin to-night. I do not know what my wife and sister will say; but it is a duty, and I am resolved to do it, and trust God for the rest. I must pray in my family."

"Not to-night," said the tempter; "you don't know how to pray. You have never prayed much. You are unacquainted with the language of prayer. Wait and learn how first."

"No, no: I *must* pray to-night; I will pray to-night. Get thee behind me, Satan."

He passed into his dwelling, and into his library, and there, before God his heavenly Father, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, he poured out his heart, and asked for strength and grace from on high to assist him in his duty.

When he met his wife that evening, she saw at once that a great change had taken place in him; and she saw it with awe, but said nothing. At length he said, "My dear wife, would you have any objections to our having family worship?" After a moment's surprise and hesitation, she said with true politeness, "Certainly not, if it is your pleasure."

"Bring me a Bible, then, please, and draw up under the gas-light, and let us read and pray." He read a chapter, and then kneeled down; but his wife and sister sat erect on their seats, and he felt that he was *alone* on his knees. He lifted up his eyes to God, and cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" and, gathering strength, he went on in his prayer, and poured out his most earnest cries and supplications that God would have mercy on his beloved wife and sister. God listened graciously to his prayer. The heart of his wife melted and was overcome. She slid from her seat upon her knees beside him, put her arms round his neck, ere she was aware, and broke out into an agonizing cry to the Lord Jesus for mercy on her soul. Then the sister knelt down by his other side, and she too put her arms around him, and shed a flood of tears. He continued to pray, and pleaded the promises of God to them that seek Him. With joy unutterable he magnified the grace of God which had pardoned his own sins. They all three were filled with peace and joy in believing, and rose from their knees to affectionately acknowledge each other

as one in Christ, and heirs together of the grace of life.* From this narrative let the pious but diffident disciples of Christ receive instruction and encouragement.

4. Want of time is an excuse pleaded by many ; but the real cause of neglect is want of inclination. If their lives are not openly profligate, still they have little or no relish for communion with God. Perhaps they are conscious of numerous defects in their moral deportment. In temper they are irritable ; in conversation unguarded ; in general behaviour uncircumspect. To these inconsistencies with Christian character the several members of the household are witnesses. The guilty parties feel ashamed ; but instead of setting about an immediate reformation, they seek a little fallacious relief in the omission of an important duty.

It is not improbable that the ancient Jews who refused to keep the sabbatic year, pleaded that without encroaching on that institution they had not time to perform their temporal duties, and that they could not afford to devote so much time to religious observances. But when God delivered them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar for their disobedience, they would have been thankful for that periodical relaxation from bodily toil which their law required. Wealth acquired by devoting that time to secular pursuits which ought to be employed in religious exercises is undesirable property. The curse of God is upon it. "The little that a good man hath is better than the treasures of many wicked."

Family worship should be performed with regularity. For the repose and nourishment of the body, sleep and meals are taken at stated periods. By these wise arrangements physical health and buoyancy of spirits are promoted

* "Power of Prayer," by Dr. Prime.

much more than they would be by taking rest and food without regard to any order of time. And if experience has pronounced it to be a domestic convenience to sit down to table daily at appointed hours, and if the recurrence of those hours regularly bring the different members of the family together to partake of the bread that perisheth, why should not similar arrangements be made with respect to their spiritual repasts? Seasons may occur when the family meal or the domestic prayer cannot be enjoyed with wonted regularity; but neither one nor the other should be omitted at the appointed hour for every little obstruction. In Fuller's Good Thoughts we have the following useful anecdote:—"A person of great quality was pleased to lodge a night in my house. I durst not invite him to my family prayer, and therefore, for that time omitted it; thereby making a breach in a good custom, and giving Satan advantage to assault it. Yea, the loosening of such a link might have endangered the scattering of the chain. Hereafter, whoever cometh within the door, shall be requested to come within the discipline of my house." Before we dismiss this division of our subject we may just remark, that family prayer should not be observed merely through custom, conventional respect, ability, carnal policy, or to quiet the admonitions of conscience. The motives should be strictly evangelical. And we should be deeply impressed with the fact, that family prayer can exert its full and proper influence only when we live as we pray.

5. *Another proper place of prayer, is the social circle, whether it be comparatively private or public.* Some persons who admit their obligation to enter into their closets and pray to their heavenly Father in secret, plead exemption from obligation to join in public prayers. But the

same authority which commands the former practice enjoins the latter.

1. The Jewish temple was designed by Jehovah—not merely a place of sacrifice and religious instruction, but also as a “house of prayer for all nations.” The people were commanded to “enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.” To encourage them to draw near to the literal mercy-seat, which was in the Holy of Holies, and there pour out their hearts before Him, He graciously promised to hear their supplications in heaven, His dwelling-place, and to forgive their sins. And when distance rendered it impracticable to pray within the temple or any of its sacred courts, He directed them to pray towards it, and mercifully engaged to regard their prayers and to bless their souls. The temple was dedicated to God by prayer. And when Solomon had presented his fervent and copious supplications to heaven on that awfully sublime occasion, the glory of the Lord filled the house. This was a striking proof that God had listened propitiously to Solomon’s prayer, and that the dedication of that cosmopolitan house of prayer was acceptable to Him. Social prayer, therefore, is no less a divine institution than private prayer.

2. Agreeably with the original worship of the Jewish temple, one of the principal elements of synagogue worship among the ancient Jews was prayer. “The most solemn and formal of these,” says Dr. Porter, “were those called the ‘eighteen prayers.’ To these, which are ascribed to Ezra, Rabbi Gamaliel is said to have added a nineteenth against the Christians. Three times a-day at the stated hour of prayer, all who were of age were required to repeat these prayers . . . Besides these nineteen prayers, the deliberate reading of which would occupy about ten

minutes, others of a less formal kind were intermingled in their worship." But in course of time they extended the prayer department of the synagogue service to such an undue length that our Lord marked His disapprobation thereof by a public censure.

3. The apostles addicted themselves to social prayer. Peter and John were arrested by the exasperated priests and Sadducees for having preached Christ and the resurrection. On the following day the apostles were arraigned before the council to take their trial. The Holy Ghost taught them in that same hour what to say, and gave them a mouth and wisdom which their learned persecutors were not able to gainsay or resist. First, silence was imposed on them. "And they commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus." The apostles refused to obey. Next they were threatened and then dismissed. "And being let go they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord. And when they had prayed the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts iv. 1—31.)

4. The Primitive Christians followed the apostles' example. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42) When Peter was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa, with an intention to murder him after the Paschal feast, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him"—not individually in their closets, but in fellowship at the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark. Nor did they pray in vain. At midnight God delivered the guiltless apostle

from the dungeon by the hand of an angel, and restored him to their company.

5. The "Lord's Prayer," as it is usually called, is evidently designed not so much for individual as for social purposes. The prayer commences with a plural pronoun, "*Our* Father"—not, *my* Father. Every pronoun in the prayer is of the same number. Not one is singular. Thus a social principle is interwoven with the entire prayer. This is not the result of accident, but of design. "It was a maxim of the Jews," says Dr. A. Clarke, "that a man should not pray alone, but join with the Church; by which they particularly meant that he should, whether alone or in the synagogue, use the plural number, as comprehending all the followers of God. Hence they say, Let none pray the short prayer, *i.e.*, as the gloss expounds it, the prayer in the singular, but in the plural number." "The heart," says one, "of a child of God is a brotherly heart, in respect of all other Christians: it asks nothing but in the spirit of unity, fellowship, and Christian charity; desiring that for its brethren, which it desires for itself." In the social circle, it is an oversight for a man to confine his prayer wholly or chiefly to himself and the members of his own family. His petitions should embrace all who are present. He will do well to reflect, that I, my, and me, exclude all others; while we, our, and us, include both others and himself. And whenever we pray in fellowship with our fellow-beings, comprehensive terms, which encircle the whole assembly, should be employed. To a thoughtful mind there is a peculiarly sweet and fraternal feeling associated with thanksgiving and prayer, which are offered to God in the plural form. On the contrary, the singular form tends to chill our fraternal sympathy.

6. Social prayer is not sufficiently appreciated. How frequently do we hear it said by persons from whom more discernment and piety might be expected, "I am not going to the meeting. There will be no sermon. It is only a prayer-meeting." Clothe these sentiments in the following language, and their impropriety will at once appear, "I am not going to the meeting. No man is going to address the assembly. The people are only going to address the Almighty." "Prayer," says Bishop Bull, "is the principal and most noble part of God's worship, and to be preferred before preaching." The immediate objects of preaching are men. But prayer is immediately addressed to God Himself. Hence the place of God's worship is styled by our Saviour, "The house of prayer." It is not called a *preaching house* (though there must be preaching there too at proper seasons) but a "house of prayer," because prayer is the principal worship of God, to which all religious houses are dedicated, and it is the constant and daily business to be performed in them.

7. But it is "neither in this mountain, nor in that"—neither in this "Church," nor in that "Meeting-house" exclusively, where social prayer ought to be offered to God. On this point educational prejudice and sectarian views have sadly blinded Jews and Christians—Churchmen and dissenters. "I will," says the Apostle of the Gentiles, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." (1 Tim. ii. 8.) This may refer to a Jewish superstition. They thought, at first, that no prayer could be acceptable that was not offered at the temple at Jerusalem; afterward, this was extended to the Holy Land: but when they became dispersed among the nations, they built oratories, or places of prayer, principally by rivers and the seaside. And in these they

were obliged to allow that public prayer might be legally offered; but they believed it ought not to be offered in any other place. In opposition to this notion, the apostle commands men to "pray everywhere." As all places belong to God's dominions, and as He fills every place, in every place he may be worshipped and glorified.

Established churches, be they Papal or Protestant, are strongly leavened with the old Jewish superstition. Mr. J. Jones, a clergyman of the Church of England, in his "Essay on Public Worship," having remarked that when the Temple of Solomon was finished, it was immediately applied to its proper use, to be a house of prayer, adds, "And now our churches are the places where God has recorded his name, and where his glory dwelleth; and where he will come and bless all who worship him in spirit and in truth." But what does Jesus Christ say on this subject? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) And we think it safer to follow Jesus Christ and St. Paul, than to adopt the contracted sentiments of the ancient Jews and the Rev. John Jones. "All places," says Dr. Dwight, "where we can pray with decency, and without ostentation and interruption, are proper places for the performance of this duty."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN AND FOR WHAT WE OUGHT TO PRAY.

- I. Let stated periods be fixed (1.) For secret prayer. (2.) Family prayer. (3.) Peculiar seasons. II. For what we ought to pray. 1. It is our duty to pray for blessings, in behalf of ourselves. 2. Christians ought to pray for each other. 3. Believers should pray for ministers of the Gospel. 4. Ministers of the Gospel should pray for the people of their charge. 5. Believers should plead with God in behalf of the oppressed and afflicted. 6. For the Christian Church. 7. For national mercies. 8. For large and influential classes of our fellow subjects. 9. For the salvation of sinners. 10. For their persecutors.

"In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."—Phil. iv. 6.

THE several periods when it is proper or expedient to engage in prayer, are left undetermined in the Bible. Nevertheless, the circumstances of the case, and the general teaching of God's word, suggest the propriety of laying down a few advisory rules on the subject. Without method and regularity, a man may toil at his profession for many years to little purpose. Besides, work which may be done any time may be delayed indefinitely, and perhaps never done at all. The following is a good maxim: "Have a time for every thing, and do every thing in its time." This maxim applies to prayer no less than to the ordinary affairs of life. In accordance with these views, we advise—

I. *Let stated periods be fixed* (1) *For secret prayer, and do not suffer common events to interfere with this arrangement.* Punctuality will grow into a habit. As

the moment approaches for private communion with God, you will easily recollect your solemn engagement, and your mind will be predisposed for the duty. In preparing for the closet let your thoughts be as little as possible encumbered with topics which are foreign to your object. "The heart," says St. Jerome, "never does its work well when preoccupied with other things."

(2.) *In the family, let some specific time be fixed for morning prayer.* When it is most convenient for all the members of the household, let the head of the house assemble them for devotion. Offer to God your grateful acknowledgments for His protection during the silent hours of the night, and the privilege of sharing the blessings of another day. Invoke His blessing on your goings out and comings in, and on all the labour of your hands. Pray especially that He may preserve you from sin, and lead you in the way everlasting. Again gather round the family altar in the evening. Present your united sacrifice of praise to God for the blessings of the day. Implore His pardoning grace, and the sanctifying influence of His Spirit to purify your hearts from any guilt which you may have contracted in your intercourse with the world, or your conflicts with the powers of darkness.

(3.) *Seasons of peculiar joy or overwhelming sorrow are extremely proper for prayer.* Whatever be the occasion of our extraordinary joy, if it be rational and solid, we ought to express our gratitude to God, the author of all substantial enjoyment. And if our hearts are overwhelmed with grief and care, we should look to the Rock that is higher than ourselves for consolation. "Call upon me," saith the Lord, "in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me." How often any individual or a family should suspend their daily tasks and convene for prayer,

we have no authority to determine. However, as the Lord teaches us that men ought always to pray, and not faint, there is not much danger on the side of excess. Vain repetitions, whether they be offered by heathens, Jews, Mohammedans, Papists, or Protestants, are not prayers, properly speaking; they are a sort of enchantments, which the superstitious devotees suppose will ensure the approval and blessing of the objects to whom they are offered. This remnant of paganism must not be confounded with praying without ceasing. God looks more at the real character and motives of prayer, than at the number of times a petition is repeated. But as circumstances are occurring incessantly, which an overruling providence can direct and control for our good, we should believingly ask the blessing of God on all our affairs.

II. *For what we ought to pray.* Themes of prayer are indefinitely numerous and diversified. We shall not therefore attempt to furnish a complete classification. Some instruction, nevertheless, may assist both recollection and devotion. Taking the Scriptures for our guide, we learn—

1. *That it is our duty to pray for blessings, both temporal and spiritual, in behalf of ourselves.* “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” (Philip. iv. 6.) This passage of Scripture is remarkably comprehensive. It embraces every circumstance and event by which we may be affected in our present state. Temptations of one kind or another, are almost constantly present. Necessities, either temporal or spiritual, are ever recurring. Are you a true Christian? How frequently are fresh supplies of grace absolutely necessary to preserve you unspotted by the world. And who does not

need the mercy of God to forgive his short-comings, and the influence of the Holy Spirit to increasingly sanctify him, and stimulate him to a cheerful and energetic discharge of his religious duties? And in every case when a man's conduct has been to his own conscience of a questionable character, it is far better to go at once to the throne of grace for atonement and help, than to parley with the tempter, and to calculate how many, and what kinds of infirmities, are consistent with a hope of heaven. When he is building for eternity, he should take care that his house is based on a rock.

2. *Christians should pray for each other.* Prayer to a person and prayer for a person are two very distinct things. Prayer offered to any created object, however exalted and dignified that object may be, is idolatry. But reciprocal prayers by the members of the household of faith, for each other's improvement and edification, are not only allowed, but positively enjoined. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James v. 16.) "If any man see his brother sin a sin, not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them which sin not unto death." (1 John v. 16.) To encourage Christians in this holy and fraternal exercise, St. James reminds us of the efficacy of believing and energetic prayer, as manifested in the history of Elijah (v. 17, 18). There is no conceivable form of expressing our profound regard for those whom we love more sublime than that of earnestly pleading their cause at the throne of grace.

3. *Believers should pray for ministers of the Gospel.* Their sacred profession binds them to appear statedly at the head of Christian assemblies, and a very considerable division of their official duty consists in leading congrega-

tional devotions, praying with families in their pastoral visits, and in pleading with God at the bed-sides of the afflicted and dying. And it may be thought that there is no weighty reason for praying for those who pray themselves professionally without ceasing. But we could assign many reasons why you should remember your religious guides in your intercessions with God. They are not angels, but men, and men of like passions with yourselves. They have the same animal appetites and passions to keep in subjection to the authority of Christ. Neither conversion nor holy orders can transform them into a class of beings constitutionally different from yourselves. And as they possess a nature in common with mankind, you may rationally infer that they are tempted in all points as you are, and stand in need of the same grace to enable them to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil successfully. If you have your besetting sins, they have theirs. If you have weaknesses, so have they. If you wish to know how their minds are exercised, reflect on your own experience. Besides, ministers are exposed to many subtle and dangerous temptations to which you are not liable. Is a preacher an eloquent orator, and mighty in the Scriptures? He is tempted to be proud, and to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Is he popular, and a favourite with the multitude? He is in danger of preaching himself, and not Christ Jesus the Lord. Is he illiterate, and are his talents few and feeble? He is tempted to envy and depreciate his superiors in attainments. Does he love study? He is extremely liable to rely on his own preparations, and to prefer literary pursuits to pastoral labours. Is intellectual improvement and research an irksome task? He will speak disparagingly of book knowledge, and fanatically expect, in his pulpit

ministrations, unpromised assistance from heaven. Does the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands? Satan would have him appropriate that glory to himself which belongs exclusively to his Divine Master. But does he seem to proclaim the gospel to a careless people? Do none seem to believe his report, and to be converted by his ministry? The devil would have him throw up his commission, and retire into the shade.

Ministers of the Gospel experience many discouragements of which private Christians know nothing. They have burdens to bear which you are not called to touch with one of your fingers. The most accomplished ambassador of Christ is not sufficient of himself to discharge efficiently those momentous duties which, in his sacred office, necessarily devolve upon him. His responsibility, too, is greater than yours. He is entrusted with the oversight of precious, immortal souls; and, at a period not remote from the present, he will be summoned before the judgment-seat of Christ to give an account of his stewardship. The growth of a Christian Church in holiness and knowledge, and the conversion of sinners to God, depend in a great measure on the moral character and qualifications of the minister. Why God has so ordered it we cannot tell. But that He has ordered it so is one of the plainest truths of the Bible, confirmed by general experience. These are some of the weighty reasons why we bespeak your intercession with God for His ambassadors. Pray, then, that they may be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. While preparing food for you, it is possible for them to lose their own appetite and perish in the midst of plenty; or, as St. Paul says, "after preaching to others, they themselves may become cast-aways." Pray that they may be burning and shining

lights to the people of their charge, that on their account the adversary may have no occasion to blaspheme, and that the household of faith may be stimulated to go on to perfection. The best discourses can do but little good unless they be supported by a circumspect life. A minister of the gospel must be blameless, and a pattern to his flock. But it is impossible to maintain propriety of conduct without continual supplies of divine grace. Entreat God, therefore, richly to endue them with His Holy Spirit. Pray that the word of the Lord may abide in their hearts, that their souls may be constantly replenished with holy oil, that the lamp of Divine truth may shine bright and clear from their hallowed lips, that they may be able ministers of the New Testament—workmen that need not to be ashamed—rightly divide the word of truth, and give to everyone a portion of meat in due season. Pray that they may be blessed with spiritual discernment and moral courage, to declare faithfully the whole counsel of God. Pray that their brows may be as brass, and their faces as flint, that they be enabled to attack men's besetting sins with resolution, and to destroy every refuge of lies. And pray especially that God may crown their labours with numerous conversions to Himself.

4. *Ministers of the gospel should pray for the people to whom they minister in holy things.* Nor should this service be confined to the pulpit, the prayer-meeting, and the domestic circle. In his perambulating meditations—in his retired studies and in his closet devotions, the spiritual welfare of his charge ought frequently to be the burden of his anxiety and supplication. When Dr. Baker, president of Hamilton College, U.S., was informed by his servant that the physician said, "he could not live to exceed half an hour," "Is it so?" said the great and good man,

"then take me out of bed, and place me upon my knees: let me spend that time in calling upon God for the salvation of the world." His request was complied with, and he expired on his knees, praying for the salvation of his fellow men.

5. *Believers should intercede with God in behalf of the oppressed and afflicted.* When Peter was imprisoned by Herod Agrippa, with an intention to put him to death after the Passover, prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. In answer to their prayers, God delivered Peter by the ministry of an angel. (Acts xii. 5.) "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil (medicinally we suppose), in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith (not the anointing oil) shall save the sick." (James v. 14.) The beloved disciple John, writing to his friend Gaius, says, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Or, according to Dr. A. Clarke's version, "Above all things I pray that thou mayest prosper, and be in health." In his Epistle to the Hebrews, the author says, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." (xiii. 3.) Whether he refers to those Christians who were suffering imprisonment for the testimony of Jesus, or to those who were living in slavery, or to both these classes of sufferers, the object of his exhortation is the same. He would have us feel and act towards others, as we would have others to feel and act towards ourselves, were our circumstances changed. From these passages of Scripture we learn that Christianity is not selfish and stoical; but sympathetic and generous.

6. *Believers ought to pray for the Christian Church.* For her stability, protection, progress in grace and knowledge, and the success of her aggressive operations. "Pray for the peace (that is, the general welfare) of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee." The tranquillity, the reputation, the harmony, and success of Zion, depend greatly on the pious and intelligent solicitude of her citizens.

7. *Christians ought to pray for national mercies.* "Ask ye of the Lord rain, in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." (Zech x. 1.; 1 Tim. ii. 1-3). Pray that God may ever dispose the Sovereign to rule in righteousness—that He may teach our senators wisdom—that He may turn the counsels of the ungodly into foolishness—that He may repress public vice and encourage virtue—that He may avert national calamities by saving us from national sins. "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but one sinner destroyeth much good." Consequently, the surest safeguard to a country is the fear of God, and the best patriot is the holiest Christian. Ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom from being destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven. Next to our country,

8. *Large and influential classes of our fellow-subjects have a claim on our prayerful consideration.* Our army,

our navy, our commercial seamen, are important members of the body politic, and are separately entitled to our religious solicitude. A gigantic force is wielded by the press. This force, for good or for evil, according to the direction which is given to it, is immensely great. The talent, the political tenets, the religious creeds, the moral power, and the general character of the nation, are powerfully affected by the press. In reference to this mighty instrument, Cowper says,

“How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
 Thou God of our idolatry—the Press?
 By thee religion, liberty, and laws,
 Exert their influence and advance their cause.
 By thee, worse plagues than Pharaoh’s land befell,
 Diffused, make earth the vestibule of hell.
 Thou fountain at which drink the good and wise;
 Thou ever bubbling spring of endless lies;
 Like Eden’s dread probationary tree,
 Knowledge of good and evil is from thee.”

Deeply impressed with a conviction of the potent energy of the press, pray that God may let his withering curse fall on every literary speculation in vice, and control the intellect and printing machinery of the country for the promotion of His own glory and our national weal.

9. *Christians ought to pray for the salvation of sinners.* This topic, indeed, ought to form one of the principal burdens of our intercessions at the throne of grace. The original promise of a deliverer which God gave to our first parents in Eden, implied the recovery of sinners from the fall, and their restoration to the Divine favour. The doctrine of intercessory prayer in behalf of the ungodly was distinctly understood, and devoutly practised by the early patriarchs. Abraham pleaded with God for the Sodomites, and Moses for the refractory Israelites, with signal

success. David prayed that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end. Jeremiah, Daniel, and Nehemiah wept and prayed for the reformation of their ungodly countrymen. Our Lord Himself set us a striking example of intercession for sinners during his passion on the cross. His very murderers were among the objects of His profound and intense compassion. He prayed—not merely that His heavenly Father would forbear to inflict upon them some signal mark of His wrath ; but that He would graciously pardon and save them. “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” On the same subject, the mind that was in Christ shone with singular lustre in the great apostle of the Gentiles. “ Brethren,” says he, “ My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” And again, “ I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” Jesus Christ was made a curse for us, that He might deliver us from the curse of the Law. And Paul would have willingly suffered the curse of a temporal death, if by such an act of self-sacrifice he would have been the means of saving his unbelieving countrymen. Now, what is the inference which we ought to draw from what we have advanced on this subject? Every believer ought to sympathise with sinners, and pray earnestly and believingly for their conversion to God.

10. *Christians ought to pray for their persecutors.* Although it is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing ; and although it is an honour to be worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake, yet how prone we are to regard the

authors of our unmerited sufferings with indignation and resentment. Should these emotions arise in our breasts without extreme caution they will betray us into actual sin. Christians are under no obligation to pusillanimously lie down and suffer their outrageous persecutors to ride over them rough-shod. On the contrary, they ought to maintain their rights, whether secular or religious, to vindicate their injured reputation, and to repel the groundless aspersions of their adversaries. But in no case are they authorised to render evil for evil; but must endeavour to overcome evil with good. Our blessed Lord who "did no sin," and consequently gave no occasion for evil treatment, was nevertheless the butt of contradiction and malice. But "when he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." In accordance with His own example He commands His disciples to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute them. Persecutors, however, can derive but little consolation from this command of Christ; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER XX.

ON FORMS OF PRAYER.

Six Reasons advanced in favour of forms of prayer. These reasons examined and answered. Seven Reasons advanced against forms of prayer.

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.”—Matt. vi. 7.

On this subject a great deal has been written for and against with considerable warmth and ability.

In favour of forms it is contended,

1. “That they are a help by which a child may be trained to walk alone ; the staff by which weak Christians may, through the divine blessing, be supported ; or the strong occasionally when labouring under present deadness or indisposition, be much assisted.”—Bickersteth.

2. “That a liturgy prevents absurd, extravagant, or impious addresses to God, which in an order of men so numerous as the sacerdotal, the folly and enthusiasm of many must always be in danger of producing, where the conduct of the public worship is intrusted, without restraint or assistance, to the discretion and abilities of the officiating minister.”

3. “That it prevents the confusion of extemporary prayers, in which the congregation being ignorant of each petition before they hear it, and having little or no time to join in it after they have heard it, are confounded between their attention to the minister, and to their own devotion. Joint prayer, which amongst all denominations of Christians is the declared design of “coming together,” is

prayer in which all join ; and not that which one alone in the congregation conceives and delivers, and of which the rest are merely hearers.”—Paley.

4. “The Lord’s Prayer is a precedent, as well as a pattern, for forms of prayer.”

5. That the propriety of forms in prayer is virtually admitted by all who use precomposed psalms or hymns in their devotions, these being, in fact, forms of prayer and praise. The late Mr. John Newton of London, an Episcopalian Minister of honourable memory, treats this grave subject in the following strain of pleasantry :—

“Crito freely will rehearse
Forms of prayer and praise in verse ;
Why should Crito then suppose
Forms are sinful when in prose ? ”

“If I were persuaded,” he continues, “that forms are unlawful in prayer, and yet approved of singing in public worship, I should greatly covet the talent of extempore hymn-making, that I might maintain consistency in the whole service.”

6. In behalf of a liturgy, the Rev. John Jones in his *Essays on Public Worship*, pp. 38, 39, employs the following singular argument :—“Since Jesus Christ himself has given us a form of prayer, we may see the advantage of a liturgy, that ‘form of sound words which we are to hold fast.’” 2 Tim. i. 13. “The tendency of a scriptural liturgy is to preserve the spirit of prayer ; and it remains as a standard of the doctrines of the Christian Church, from which its ministers cannot deviate without being found out as deviating from divine truth !” As most of these arguments for a liturgy are directed against extemporary prayer, we shall first reply to them, and then notice some disadvantages which are associated with settled forms.

1. That forms of prayer may be advantageously used by some people I neither deny nor question. Deficient sight may be aided with spectacles, the lame assisted with crutches, and the deaf helped with ear-trumpets. And persons who cannot readily think for themselves may be helped in their meditations, to some excellent thoughts, by judicious forms of prayer. Such helps are particularly useful to infants and young children, whose mental faculties are yet unfolded. And there is no impropriety in training children to walk with go-carts and leading-strings till such time as they can walk erect without assistance. But after they can run about we never think of compelling them to travel in fetters, for the purpose of preventing a stumble or an occasional fall.

2. Extemporary prayer is neither necessarily nor usually extravagant; and it is rarely impious. In prayer God sees not as man sees. Man looketh on the outward appearance; but God looketh at the heart. There may be the greatest propriety of expression while the heart is seriously at fault. On the other hand, the mind may be embarrassed and the lips may stumble, while the soul is devoutly waiting on God. "Any man," says Baxter, "if he is hungry, can beg for bread; or if he needs it, ask help of a physician, or lawyer, or landlord, as well without a studied form as with it. A very child, if he sees a pedlar's pack opened, where there are abundance of things which he desireth, will learn without book to say, O father, give me this, and give me that. So will the soul that seeth the treasures of Christ. He that knoweth God and his works, and knoweth his own sins and wants, is acquainted with the best prayer-book." "Prayer," says Dr. Dwight, "is, of all kinds of discourse, that which least demands elegance of style. Every professed ornament it rejects with dis-

dain. The simplest, plainest, and least artificial manner of uttering his thoughts alone becomes the character of a suppliant, or the occasion and design of his supplication. . . . He who has universally made prayer a prime duty of man, has qualified man for the performance of this duty ; and, as I apprehend, much more happily than this objection (of Dr. Paley) supposes." Paley, it should be remembered, although he was a shrewd man and a candid writer, knew but little, experimentally, what passed among Dissenters ; like many other clergymen of the State Church, in warmly advocating the usages of his own Church, he was extremely liable to conjecture that improprieties, which rarely took place in other communities, were of frequent occurrence.

3. To the allegation that *confusion* is the result of extemporary prayer, we reply,

(1.) This is one of the gross blunders into which learned men, in support of their favourite theories, not unfrequently stumble. Did Solomon employ a host of scribes to write (for the art of printing was not then discovered) many thousands of copies of the prayer which he intended to offer God, at the dedication of the temple, to prevent confusion at that great and glorious solemnity ? Did the apostles and primitive disciples of Christ, before they assembled for social prayer, write and circulate the several prayers which they intended to *read* when they were assembled at the place of devotion ? If we have not absolute proof, we have very strong reasons to believe that they did nothing of the kind. But if men could *join* in prayer without *confusion*, with Solomon, the apostles, and Primitive disciples, in the absence of forms, they may do so now.

(2.) According to Paley, "the devotion of the hearer "

(of an extemporary prayer) "is necessarily suspended, until a petition be concluded," . . . and "before he can address the same request to God for himself, and from himself, his attention is called off to keep pace with what succeeds." This is another adventurous sally of the arch-deacon's fertile imagination. Were the evils on which he metaphysically expatiates real, they could not be remedied by a liturgy. If an assembly must hear a petition completed by the person who leads the devotion, before they can present that petition to God themselves, they must, provided they use a liturgy, *read* a complete petition before they can offer it to God. And, unless they be dull of hearing, they can hear a petition pronounced by another person in as short a time as they can deliberately *read* a petition themselves. And

(3.) It is as easy for five hundred or a thousand persons "to keep pace" with a person engaged in audible prayer without a book, as it is with a book; and indeed much easier, unless the worshippers with books read in silence. Rapid readers take the lead. Slow readers follow after. But little time is allowed by the principal reader for those in the rear to complete their petitions. Before he has well read his petition, "his attention is called off to keep pace with what succeeds."

(4.) "A congregation," says Paley, "may be pleased and affected with the prayers and devotions of their minister, without joining in them; in like manner as an audience oftentimes are with the representation of devotion upon the stage, who, nevertheless, come away without being conscious of having exercised any act of devotion themselves." Very true. But true devotion cannot be secured by the use of prayer-books. If it could it would be one of the easiest accomplishments in the world.

Readers, as well as hearers, may be formal worshippers. The true worshipper, book or no book, will *join* in the devotion.

(5.) But "the labouring recollection," says Paley, "and embarrassed or tumultuous delivery, of many extempore speakers, form an additional objection to this mode of public worship (extemporary prayer); for these imperfections are very general, and give great pain to the serious part of a congregation, as well as afford a profane diversion to the levity of the other part." This is another extravagant assumption, wholly destitute of proof. A person who has seldom or never attended divine worship among dissenters may be led to suppose from Paley's statements, that public prayers, if not in the liturgical form, are distressing to a devout and an intelligent Christian. But he may rest assured that "there is more danger of mental embarrassment in praying by forms than without them." The sudden transit of a dark cloud, the misplacing of spectacles, or the turning over of a wrong leaf, may lead to a painful confusion. Job Orton says, "I have sometimes felt pain at the hesitation of dissenting ministers, but much more at the blunders of those who read prayers." He then speaks of being at a funeral, where the officiating clergyman was a most devout minister, who had read the burial service about one hundred times a year, for forty years successively. Yet, he says, "the candles held at the grave being almost blown out, this worthy man could not, or would not, repeat without book the two last collects, but blundered in the most painful manner."* Had the occasion been less solemn, the stumbling of the venerable reader might have afforded profane diversion to the wicked. But in prayer to God we must not study to please foolish

* Dr. E. Porter, on Public Prayer.

and profane men, who are ever disposed to turn even religion itself into diversion.

(6.) Were Dr. Paley's doctrine of confusion arising from the use of extemporary prayer sound, the objection would lie against preaching without books, as well as against praying without books. If an assembly experience no difficulty in joining in the worship of preaching and hearing the Gospel, they may, with equal readiness, join in extemporary prayers. But to secure "joint worship," and "prevent confusion," what preacher ever deems it necessary to print and circulate his sermons before he ventures to deliver them from the pulpit?

4. We doubt whether the Lord's Prayer be designed by Him, "as a pattern for forms of prayer." For—

(1.) The prayer, as recorded by Matthew and Luke, though substantially one, includes many variations of expression, as any one may see by careful comparison. Compare Matt. vi. 9—13 with Luke ix. 2, &c. We think it probable that these verbal variations are not accidental, but designed. They show us plainly that sentiments—not words—constitute the essence of prayer. The choicest terms and the most accurate arrangement are little worth, where thought is radically at fault.

(2.) In one important point the Lord's Prayer is defective; it contains no reference to His mediatorial office. In John xvi. 23, 24, 26, our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," &c. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John xiv. 6.) St. Paul, too, in his Epistle to the Colossians says, "Whatsoever ye do in word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him." But in the Lord's

Prayer, the name of Jesus is not once mentioned : perhaps because Jesus was not yet glorified. See John xvi. 24.

(3.) The apostles do not appear to have made public use of this form of prayer. Several of their prayers are recorded in the New Testament ; but none of them appear to be, even in substance, repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, nor preconceived forms. Both the sentiments and phraseology of their prayers were evidently suggested by the circumstances which gave rise to their utterance.

5. The argument for the use of forms of prayer based on the use of precomposed psalms and hymns, is futile, not to say absurd. If music is admitted into our devotional exercises, the poetry and tunes must of necessity be precomposed for our guidance. Psalms and hymns, without metrical forms set to music, could not possibly be sung in concert. In singing, a thousand persons may so modulate their voices as to harmoniously utter the same words in the same measured time. This is necessary to prevent discord. But in prayer no such artistic arrangement is required. One leading voice is heard ; and all the congregation, however large, can mentally accompany that voice as well without a form as with one. In numerous instances, attention to the book, while listening to the principal reader, would rather embarrass than help devotion. Besides, many people are bad readers, while many others cannot read at all. How are they to keep pace with *fluent* readers ? The difficulty is materially increased if the officiating minister reads in a low tone, indistinctly, or rapidly. Under these circumstances how can the poor, hesitating reader, manage to keep just abreast with the incompetent leader of the service ?

6. The argument of the Rev. John Jones for a liturgy is not worth a serious reply, were it not that some weak

or unwary minds may be led by it to a fallacious conclusion.

(1.) Mr. Jones thinks that "Since Jesus Christ Himself has given us a form of prayer, we may see the advantages of a liturgy;" as if a single outline of prayer, *only twenty seconds long*, were a warrant for compiling and using a volume of prayers nearly as large as the New Testament!

(2.) What is very marvellous, he calls "a liturgy, that form of sound words which we are to hold fast," and cites 2 Tim. i. 13, in proof of his assumption; as though St. Paul refers in this passage to the Book of Common Prayer used by the State Church of this country. Is not this perverting the Scriptures, and making them speak a language which they were never intended to speak?

(3.) As to a liturgy's "remaining a standard of the doctrine of the Christian Church," we do not believe in that. Different Churches have different liturgies. The nominal Christian Church is not one, but legion; for they are many. What is orthodoxy in one liturgy, is heterodoxy in another. Some liturgies teach us to pray for the dead and to the dead. Others instruct us to pray to God only and for the living only. Some encourage us to believe in lying wonders; others, to honour bad men as confessors and martyrs. We therefore require a more sure word of prophecy—a safer standard of doctrinal truth than human liturgies. The BIBLE, and the Bible exclusively, is the infallible standard of Divine truth. Accordingly, the 6th Article of the State Church teaches that, "*Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.*"

Having replied to the argument directed against extemporary prayer, we will now notice some disadvantages which are associated with settled forms. But before we do this it may be useful to inquire briefly into the origin and introduction of this practice into the Christian Church. To the question, "When and how did the liturgies come into use?" Dr. Porter answers, "Nothing of the kind that is genuine can be fixed upon for the first three hundred years after Christ." When the Arian and Pelagian heresies began to corrupt and disturb the Church in the fourth century, "the Council of Laodicea deemed it necessary to require, by ecclesiastical regulations, that ministers, instead of using the liberty before enjoyed, should always keep to one form of prayer." This form, however, each minister might compose for himself, provided that, "before using it, he should consult with learned and experienced brethren." This regulation was explained as already in existence, by the Council of Carthage, A.D. 397. In 416 the Council of Milan ordained, that none should use set forms of prayer, except such as were approved in a Synod. In the writings of Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, and Origen, there are internal evidences, which appear decisive against the early use of liturgies. "We pray," say these ancient fathers, "with the head lifted up, and the hands stretched out towards heaven." Origen remarks, "Before a man stretches out his hands to heaven, he must raise his soul thither; before a man raises up his eyes, he must raise his spirit up to God; for we cannot doubt that out of a thousand possible attitudes of the body, those with outspreading of the hands and uplifting of the eyes must be preferred to all others, as giving some representation of the dispositions proper to prayer." But this attitude would have been a

very inconvenient and unnatural attitude had a liturgy then been in use. But the liturgical form of devotion being once introduced into the Church, it gradually increased with the progress of idleness and superstition. Hence Bishop Burnet has well said, "that after superstition became prevalent, as in the eighth and ninth centuries, there were so many missals, breviaries, rituals, pontificals, graduals, antiphonals, psalteries, and a great many more, that the understanding how to officiate became a hard piece of trade, not to be learned without long practice." How unlike the plain and rational worship enjoined by the New Testament were these embarrassing contrivances of man. What a blessing that religious duties are to be regulated not by liturgical standards, but by the word of God. And what a blessing that we have an excellent translation of the Bible in our own tongue, and in our possession, for constant reference.

"Respecting the English liturgy," says Dr. Porter, "after the long night of superstition, as the day of the Reformation dawned on the Church, it found the clergy too ignorant to pray or preach in a becoming manner. A book of homilies was prepared to aid them in preaching, and a book of prayers, to be read instead of both extemporary devotions and the Romish liturgy. The English prayer-book, however, was chiefly compiled from the Romish, retaining superstitions respecting extreme unction, the real presence in the Eucharist, praying for the dead, &c. Three years after its first establishment, which was in 1547, it underwent such a revision as to exclude from it the above peculiarities of the (Roman) Catholics. Several other changes were made in it at different times up to 1661, but no authorized revision has since taken place." Consequently, the present liturgy of the State

Church of England is *scarcely two hundred years old*. And as it is the work of man, it will doubtless from time to time be subject to mutations. Within the last few months the Queen, prompted by a recent address of the House of Commons, issued a proclamation abolishing the State religious services of the prayer-book for the 30th of January, 29th of May, and the 5th of November. Let us now turn our attention to some of the disadvantages which are associated with forms of prayer.

1. *They cripple reflection and induce mental indolence.* Let a person habituate himself to the use of forms, and the probability is that he will trust to those forms to remind him of his wants, and to furnish him with petitions, instead of exercising his own reflective faculty, and regulating his prayers to suit his circumstances. The natural result is moral inertia.

2. *They tend to produce a dry, cold, indifferent mode of address to God.* Men seldom read, even on the most exciting subjects, with that animation and fervour which characterise their spontaneous speeches. Words that flow fresh and warm from the heart which conceives them burn and shine, while words which are read off from inanimate paper fall on the ear with little pathos. Besides, some of the brightest and most telling thoughts which find utterance in extemporary addresses, would have been repressed by a rigid adherence to preconceived forms. In some instances, and we fear in many, the listlessness of formal praying deserves the severest reprehension. We have heard of heads of families regularly calling their households together for domestic worship, and then coldly reading a prayer, as they sat leisurely in their chairs. Similar indifference is but too frequently witnessed in the Church. It is accordingly said by one accustomed to both modes of

worship, "I never saw any dissenting congregation appear half so irreverent and unaffected in prayer as I have seen those who attend the service of the Established Church."

3. *They are hostile to ready mental conception and fluent utterance.* The faculties of the mind, like the members of the body, are invigorated by exercise, while indolence is punished with imbecility. Even an educated and talented speaker may be disqualified for easy discourse, by a slavish adherence to stereotyped forms. "Bishop Patrick," says Dr. Porter, "was eminent when young, for fervour in prayer. When advanced in age he visited an old dissenting friend, and was requested to lead in family devotions. But having long been accustomed to forms, he was so embarrassed that he rose from his knees; with an apology to the family; and received from his friend this plain rebuke, "You have made a sad exchange for your lawn sleeves and mitre." "They who will adhere," says Milton to a liturgy, "bring themselves in the end to such a pass, by overmuch learning, as to lose even the legs of their devotion."

4. *Unceasing repetition of the same prayers, verba'im, tends to produce weariness and inattention.* This evil is admitted by Paley. The remedy which he prescribes for this evil, or inconvenience, as he calls it, is devotion. But we think modes of worship should help devotion, and not devotion have to struggle against inconvenient modes of worship. The truths of the Bible, which are essential to human salvation, are few and immutable. Now, suppose for these reasons a small volume of sermons were prepared and widely circulated, just as the Book of Common Prayer is among Episcopalians. Suppose further, that these sermons were read over from the pulpit, many times in the

year. Would not the people feel tired of the tautology? Would they not impatiently call for the good old truths in a change of dress? And would devotion reconcile them to the frequent periodical reading of the same truths in precisely the same phraseology? We think not. Even psalms and hymns, although they have the powerful charms of music to recommend them, if sung very often, would soon surfeit a congregation, and induce them to ask for a wholesome change.

5. *A liturgy, however copious, is too contracted to meet our ever varying and endless necessities.* Circumstances are subject to constant mutation. They continue not in one stay. Consequently, petitions which were seasonable and proper yesterday, would be impertinent to day. But if forms of prayer were never irrelevant in expression, they are constantly silent on numerous points which require our prayerful attention. They are constructed on general principles; whereas our petitions ought very often to be particular, to accord with passing events. If we desire special blessings for ourselves or others, but ask for common blessings in a general prayer, we are not likely to receive the things that we pray for. "If we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss." To the use of forms in the social prayer-meeting and the domestic circle there are very strong objections. Important events occur which no prayer-composer could foresee, and for which of course he makes no provision in his liturgical preparations. But these events require special notice at the throne of grace. This is a serious disadvantage connected with a servile adherence to permanent forms.

6. "*Forms of prayer composed in one age,*" as Arch-deacon Paley admits, "*become unfit for another, by the unavoidable change of language, circumstances, and*

opinions." This inconvenience he thinks may be obviated by "occasional revisions of a liturgy." But this remedy is far from being easy of application. On this point there is at present, in the State Church, an ardent controversy. While some are contending warmly for a revision of the Liturgy, others are pleading for its remaining in its present form. Sudden changes, if even for the better frequently shock public feeling; while salutary changes, which are brought about gradually, are rational and generally acceptable. From the free character of extemporaneous prayers they undergo appropriate changes imperceptibly. But stereotyped forms cannot be revised without creating unwholesome and perilous excitement.

7. *Another grave objection to national liturgies is, they are subject to State supervision.* If senators and Sovereigns were all discreet and consistent Christians, there might be no material danger in submitting questions of this kind to their consideration and decisions. But who and what are they in a religious point of view? Some of them are infidel Jews, some idolatrous Roman Catholics, others are ungodly Protestants. Is it reasonable that such men should have anything to do with the formation, or revision of modes of divine worship? Is it meet and right that the children of the devil should have anything to do with teaching and commanding Christians how to glorify their heavenly Father? Such a practice is degrading to any Church by which it is allowed.

To what I have advanced on forms of prayer, I will now add the judicious and candid sentiments of two prelates of the State Church. Bishop Wilkins says, "For any one so to sit down and satisfy himself with the book of prayer or prescribed form, as to go no farther, this were still to remain in his infancy, and not to grow up in his

new nature. This would be as if a man who had *once* need of crutches should always afterwards make use of them, and so necessitate himself to a continual impotency. And if it be a fault not to strive and labour after this gift, much more is it to jeer and despise it by the name of *extemporary* prayer and praying by the Spirit; which expressions are for the most part a sign of a profane heart, altogether a stranger to the power and comfort of this duty." "At a time," says Dr. Porter, "when the merits of the English liturgy were discussed with much zeal and ability, Bishop Hall, in a formal defence of it, made the following candid and Catholic remarks:—'Far be it from me to dishearten any good Christian from the use of conceived prayer in his private devotions, and upon occasions also in public. I would hate to be guilty of pouring so much water upon the Spirit, to which I should gladly add oil rather. No, let the full soul freely pour out itself in gracious expressions of its holy thoughts into the bosom of the Almighty; let both the sudden flashes of our quick ejaculations and the constant flames of our more fixed conceptions mount up from the altar of a zealous heart unto the throne of grace; and if there be some stops or solecisms in the fervent utterance of our private wants, these are so far from being offensive that they are the most pleasing music to the ears of that God unto whom our prayers come. . . . What I have professed concerning conceived prayers is that which I have ever allowed, ever practised, both in private and public. God is a free Spirit, and so should ours be, in pouring out our voluntary devotions upon all occasions. . . . The over-pressing of the liturgy, to the justling out of preaching and conceived prayers, was never intended either by the law-makers or moderate governors of the Church.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

FASTING.

I. The origin of fasting. 1. In the opinion of some authors, fasting arose from a scarcity of food, and 2. Superstition. 3. Dr. Beard considers that Moses rather allowed fasting than enjoined it. These notions fallacious. II. The nature of fasting. Radical meaning of the original term. The long fast of Paul and his companions. The national fast of the Hebrews. III. Under the Gospel dispensation fasting is not absolutely enjoined. An interview between Jesus and the disciples of John the Baptist. 1. In one case our Lord attaches extraordinary efficacy to fasting. 2. He sanctions fasting by instructing His disciples how to fast. 3. By His own example. By the Primitive Church one annual fast only was observed. A custom prevailed in many Christian churches of joining abstinence with prayer. IV. Directions for fasting profitably. Avoid 1. Superstition, 2. Fanaticism, 3. Hypocrisy, 4. Profanity. Fasting should be observed 1. Intelligently, 2. With a fixed design, 3. With moderation, 4. With wonted cheerfulness in company. V. Fasting and prayer, when observed properly, are followed by beneficial results. Several striking proofs.

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”—Matt. vi. 17, 18.

I. The origin of fasting, as a religious rite, claims our first attention.

1. In the opinion of some theological writers, fasting originated in the early ages of the world, before the time of Moses, and arose from the difficulty of uniformly obtaining a sufficient supply of food. They assume, though perhaps without sufficient evidence, that mankind subsisted on the spontaneous productions of nature and the spoils of the chase, and that as they were not always able to procure what the cravings of nature demanded, their irregular fastings from time to time were compulsory.*

* Dr. Beard, in Kitto's Bib. Cyclo. Art. Fasting.

2. They suppose, in the next place, that ignorance or superstition interpreted involuntary fasts from the scarcity of food, as an expression of the Divine will, which notion was fostered by their medical priests from considerations of physical health. According to this theory fasting gradually acquired the character of a religious duty without any intimation of the kind from God.

3. In harmony with this hypothesis, Dr. Beard supposes farther that the annual and national fast which the law of Moses enjoined on the Israelites (Lev. xvi. 29, comp. xxiii. 27) was among those things which Moses allowed rather than originated, in a regard to established custom, and from a prudent fear of defeating his own benevolent designs, by attempting to push his reformation too far. But was the reformation referred to here planned by Moses or by God? If Moses wrote the laws, God enacted them. It is also contended by the same authority that the vague and figurative language of Moses in ordaining this solitary fast, countenances this view of the subject. But with such reasoning, although from the pen of a Doctor of Divinity, we are not satisfied; and we regard it as discreditable to a learned interpreter of the Bible. We will now submit to the reader, whose impartial scrutiny we invite, the grounds of our dissatisfaction:—

1. The argument is based neither on historic proof, nor clear inferential evinence, but on mere conjecture. How does Dr. Beard know that in the early ages of the world the spontaneous productions of nature and the spoils of the chase, formed man's chief aliment? Possibly they did, but we think it probable they did not. In the dawn of the antediluvian world, Adam, while he was in a state of pristine innocency, by divine appointment was a gardener. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the

garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." And edible vegetables and fruits, as well as flowers, would doubtless share his horticultural attention. If the proper food of man was produced spontaneously out of the earth at first, it would subsequently require his culture. For this employment he was admirably fitted, and it was accordingly enjoined on him as a duty. Nor were his offspring consigned to a life of alternate idleness and laborious pursuit. They were early occupied in agricultural and pastoral pursuits. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground." (Gen. iv. 2.) And we think it highly probable that the occupations of gardening and farming, which were so very productive of human nourishment, were followed extensively by the descendants of Adam till the general deluge.

2. Immediately after the flood had subsided from the face of the earth, and the soil was in a proper state for cultivation, it seems that "Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard." Gen. xi. 20. "By his beginning to be a husbandman," says Dr. A. Clarke, "we are to understand his recommencing his agricultural operations, which he had undoubtedly carried on for six-hundred years previously, but his occupation had been interrupted by the flood." Noah, then, the patriarch of the postdiluvian world did not rely on the spontaneous productions of nature for support. As for hunting, although God had "given him every moving thing that liveth for meat," there would not be much game, considering the vast extent of their range, for many years subsequent to the deluge.

3. Abraham was born 352 years after the flood ; but he and his nephew Lot, who sojourned with him, followed pastoral pursuits, and were so immensely rich in domesticated cattle that they found it necessary to separate, and to

occupy distinct tracts of country. Nor was the employment of Abraham and his kinsman an exception to, but in harmony with, the ordinary habits of the time. Bethuel, the father of Rebekah, was both an agriculturist and a feeder of sheep, and had consequently accommodation for Eliezer and his camels. Gen. xxiv. 25-32.

4. Joseph was sold into Egypt 237 years before Moses was commissioned by the Lord to deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. But in the days of Joseph, Egypt was an agricultural kingdom and was evidently very productive in corn, the staple food of man. And centuries before that period when famine prevailed in other lands, the sufferers turned their eyes with hope towards the granaries of Egypt. Gen. xii. 10.

5. Before Joseph was carried as a slave into Egypt, powerful hordes of shepherds had invaded and conquered that country, and thereby rendered the employment of shepherds an abomination to the Egyptians. But the cultivation of corn was encouraged, as a useful and honourable vocation. And let it be remembered it was in Egypt that Moses spent the first forty years of his eventful life. When therefore it is said that in the early ages of the world mankind subsisted chiefly on the spontaneous produce of the earth and the spoils of the chase, and that when Moses enjoined fasting, it was a modification of a mere Gentile superstition, the statement ought to be received with special caution.

6. That to which we feel the strongest objection is, the representation of Moses as a mere shrewd politician, instead of an inspired legislator. Had Moses simply tolerated a practice which originated in ignorance or superstition, we think it is not likely he would have said that the Lord commanded him to enjoin the people to ordain a fast.

But he does distinctly attribute this ordinance to the appointment of God. We admit that the indefinite and figurative language in which Moses ordains this religious rite, seems to imply that it was an ordinance already known to the Hebrews. But it does not follow that it originated in either ignorance or superstition. We are inclined to believe that it was a remnant of patriarchal worship. We know that sacrificial offerings were, and we see no reason why fasting may not have been based on the same foundation. Be this as it may, it is certain that the Lord commanded Moses to appoint a fast for the observance of the Hebrew nation.

II. *The nature of a religious fast.* It is voluntary abstinence from food, associated with penitential mourning for sin, and supplication for mercies. The Hebrew word *tzom*, which is rendered a fast, is derived from the root, *tzm*, which signifies empty, meagre, thin. And as a noun, the term is used in the sacred Scriptures to denote either entire or partial abstinence from food. Sometimes a fast was a partial abstinence only. Daniel mourned for three weeks successively. He ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth. Dan. x. 2, 3. This fast was a general abstinence from agreeable and nutritious food, and a subsistence during the time on coarse and unsavoury provision, such as bread, pulse, &c. for food, and water for drink. The long fast which St. Paul and his companions in peril observed, on their voyage to Rome, was doubtless of a similar kind, not total, but partial. For a whole fortnight they were daily anticipating shipwreck. In this anxious and alarming state they had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to enjoy their regular meals. And they probably ate little or nothing but what was absolutely necessary to sus-

tain life. And as their strength was nearly exhausted by fear, watching, and protracted abstinence, when Paul was divinely certified of their safety, he assured them of their personal security and encouraged them to take some refreshment. "And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, this day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you." Acts xxvii. 33, 34. We think the apostle's words should be interpreted with some degree of modification. For had they eaten nothing at all during an entire fortnight, many, if not all of them, would doubtless have literally perished with hunger. "Judith," we are informed, "fasted all the days of her widowhood." Judith viii. 6. Not subsisted without food of course, but subjected her appetite to a chastening diet. When a crowd of people followed Christ, and had been with Him three days only without food, He said, "I have compassion on the multitude, and will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way." Long continued fasting is extremely exhausting to bodily strength, and very injurious to health. But moderate fasting, although it transiently diminishes physical energy, is not detrimental to general health. God is not a hard Master, nor is any branch of rational worship at variance with human weal. If any persons cannot totally abstain from food beyond an ordinary length of time without intense suffering, or material risk to health, they may nevertheless fast partially, by denying themselves the usual quantity and quality of nourishment.

The great national fast which Moses ordained for the Hebrews was on the great day of annual atonement—a

season of extraordinary solemnity. We are not aware that any other fast was instituted by the same Divinely-inspired legislator. The terms in which this institution is ordained, to us are figurative and vague; but to the Hebrews they were no doubt sufficiently intelligible. "And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country or a stranger that sojourneth among you." This commandment is repeated chap. xxiii. 27—32. Nephesh, which is here, and in the Scriptures generally, rendered *soul*, does not signify exclusively the rational and immortal nature of man. It frequently denotes the human affections, desires, and appetites. For example, Solomon says, "The full soul (nephesh) loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul (nephesh) every bitter thing is sweet." (Prov. xxvii. 7.) Hence the expression, to "afflict the soul," is understood by the most learned and orthodox commentators to signify fasting, or the mortification of bodily appetites, by a total or partial abstinence from food. Besides this Divinely-appointed annual fast, which was designed for national and perpetual observation, many other fasts were appointed from time to time, on various occasions; but it does not appear that they were based on any Divine commandment.

III. *Under the Gospel dispensation fasting is not absolutely enjoined.*

When the disciples of John came unto Jesus, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom

shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." (Matt. ix. 15.) The last clause in this passage I understand not as a command, but as a prophecy. We think the reply of our Saviour to the disciples of John should not be interpreted as a command for his own disciples to fast, but rather as an intimation that his death and separation from them would be to them an occasion of profound sorrow, which would induce them to afflict their souls. As to the Pharisees, some of their most prominent vices were to parade their will-worship, and to require others to copy their example, as though they were models of religious perfection. But if Jesus Christ did not ordain fasting by any formal precept, He sanctioned it in more ways than one, which we presume He would not have done had there been anything in the practice objectionable.

1. In one case, at least, He attaches extraordinary efficacy to fasting. In reference to a deaf and dumb spirit, whom the disciples were unable to cast out of an afflicted youth, Jesus said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matt. xvii. 21. Compare Mark ix. 29). On this passage Dr. Beard says, in harmony with other strange remarks of his already noticed, "It would appear that the practice under consideration was considered in the days of Christ, to act in certain special cases as an exorcism." And we add, it would appear also the learned Doctor supposes that Christ took the most effectual course to perpetuate the delusion by accommodating his words to the deluded people. Is not this another glaring instance of darkening counsel by words without knowledge? And are not all such like glosses on the Saviour's conduct highly derogatory to His character.

2. Jesus Christ sanctioned fasting by instructing his disciples *how* to observe that ordinance. "Moreover when

ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matthew vi. 16—18). Passing over, for the present, what was censurable in the fastings of the Pharisees, we remark that had fasting been a mere Levitical rite, it would have been disannulled, like sacrifices and circumcision, by the establishment of the new covenant. But by laying down precepts to regulate the observance, our Lord impressed upon it the stamp of His authority.

3. Christ sanctioned fasting by His own example. It is only candid, however, to admit that the forty days fasting of our Lord, like the fasting of Moses and Elijah for the same period, was a *miraculous* fast. Total abstinence from food for so long a time, without supernatural support, would prove fatal to human life. But in the case of Christ, we are distinctly informed, that *after* He had fasted forty days—not before—he realized the sensation of hunger. But we think that even His miraculous fasting may be rationally interpreted as an encouragement to this kind of devotion on the part of His disciples. It is not likely that He would lend the weight of His example, in any form, to an observance which He disapproved.

By the Primitive Church one annual fast only was observed. By our ancestors it was called the *Spring fast* ; by ourselves, *Lent* ; by the Greeks, *Tesserakose* ; and by the Latins, *Quadragesima*. The two last names are now used by some Christians to denote the forty days fast in lent, which commences on Ash Wednesday and continues till

Easter, as a commemoration of our Lord's fasting forty days in the wilderness. This institution formed no part of primitive Christianity. In the earliest and purest ages of the Church, it does not appear that the Quadragesimal fast was kept for the aforesaid purpose. "In the most ancient times," says Mosheim, "we find no mention of any public and solemn fasts, except upon the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion." To this remark of the learned historian, we may add the views of an able commentator. Speaking of genuine Christians in the purest ages of the primitive Church, he says, "This fast was kept merely to commemorate the *time* during which Jesus Christ lay under the power of death; which was about *forty hours*:" and it was in this sense they understood the words of this text: "*The days will come,*" &c. With them the *bridegroom* meant Christ; the time in which He was *taken away*, His crucifixion, death, and the time He lay in the grave. Suppose Him dying about twelve o'clock, on what is called *Friday*, and that He rose about *four* on the morning of His own day, (St. John says early while it was yet dark, chap. xx. 1) the interim makes *forty hours*, which was the true primitive Lent, or Quadragesimal fast."* In times less glorious, learned ecclesiastics, with more zeal than prudence, substituted *days* for *hours*. Although neither Christ nor His apostles enacted any law concerning fasting, "a custom, nevertheless, prevailed among many Christians of joining abstinence with their prayers, especially when they were engaged in affairs of extraordinary importance. But as this custom was not enjoined by any law, the time which was to be employed in these acts of abstinence was left to every one's private judgement: nor were those looked upon as criminal who contented themselves with observing the

* Dr. A. Clarke's note on Matt. ix. 15.

rules of a strict temperance without proceeding any further."* In degenerate times officious rulers loaded the calendar of the Church with alternate fasts and festivals, and required a blind, obsequious conformity to *their* will.

IV. *Directions for fasting profitably.* The best and holiest things are liable to abuse. Under the law, when fasting was a divine institution, it was perverted to the vilest purposes. This grave charge applies to the same usage under the Gospel. A word of caution, therefore, cannot reasonably be considered unnecessary. Our

1. *Direction is, in fasting avoid superstition.* We have just stated that, under the old dispensation, this observance was associated with very improper designs. "When ye fast," says our Lord, "be not as the hypocrites." He meant the Pharisees. If the reader voluntarily afflicts his soul with fasting, he should do it intelligently and rationally. Among the Hindoos there are *twelve kinds* of fasts; several of them are extremely severe, and cannot fail to impair health, if not abridge life. The *first* is considered indispensable, and occurs twenty-nine times in the year. Among the Mohammedans fasting is regarded as an essential part of *piety*. With them it is of two kinds, *voluntary* and *incumbent*. By their orthodox divines it is termed "the gate of religion." Their great annual fast is kept in the month Ramadan, beginning at the first new moon, and continuing till the appearance of the next; during which it is required to abstain from every kind of nourishment, from day-break till after sunset of each day. From this observance none are excused except the sick, the aged, and children. "We and the Pharisees," said the disciples of John to our Lord, "fast oft." The Pharisees had numerous fasts for superstitious

* Mosheim.

purposes. They fasted in order to have lucky *dreams*—to obtain the interpretation of a dream, or to avert the evil import of a dream. They also fasted often for the purpose of obtaining the things which they desired. Fasts of this description are plentifully mixed up with the “Jewish fables.” See Dr. A. Clarke on Matt. ix. 14, and his remarks at the end of the chapter. The Pharisee who “went up to the temple to pray” boasted, in his solemn address to God, that he “fasted twice in the week,” as did all the strict Pharisees. The *first* weekly fast was on the fifth day (Thursday), in commemoration of Moses’ ascent to Mount Sinai, to receive the law; the *second*, on the second day (Monday), in remembrance of his descent with the tables of the law, which events they suppose occurred on these days respectively. From the self-righteous tone in which the Pharisee referred to these very frequent periodical fastings he evidently regarded them as meritorious, and entitled to a reward.

By degrees, superstitious notions, in connection with fasting, crept into the Church of Christ. In the third century primitive Christianity was on the decline. Established corruptions flourished, and new forms of a spurious religion were developed. The rites of the people were violated—the bishops extolled episcopal dignity, aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than that which they had hitherto enjoyed, and gradually paved the way for the government of the church to be erected into a spiritual monarchy. At the same time some of them were addicted to luxury, contention, arrogance, and other vices, which subjected the Gospel ministry and religion to open scandal. It was in those times of degeneracy and reproach that fasting began to be held in higher esteem than it had been previously. A high degree of sanctity was attributed

to this practice. It was even looked on as indispensably necessary, from a notion that demons employed their stratagems principally against those who fed themselves without fear; but were less troublesome to those who chastened themselves with rigorous abstinence. With the lapse of time superstition acquired increasing prevalence and strength. In the fifth century fasting was considered as a most effectual means of repelling the force, and disconcerting the schemes of evil spirits, and of appeasing the anger of an offended God. The dignitaries of the Church consequently flattered themselves that they rendered acceptable service, both to the Almighty and to mankind, by establishing fasting by express laws, and imposing its observance as an imperative duty. But the burdens of superstition which the clergy thus bound on the people's shoulders, were not so oppressive as they would have been, had the austere fasts of previous times been preserved. The fasts of the fifth century were much less mortifying to flesh and blood than were those which were solemnized in the earlier ages of the Church. The latter involved a total abstinence from meat and drink. The former were mere abstinence from animal food and wine. Persons therefore, if they were so disposed, might observe the discipline of the Church, and at the same time be mere vegetarian teetotallers, and fare sumptuously every day. But this lax kind of fasting, if it be proper to call it by this name, is infinitely preferable to suicide by insupportable abstinence from every kind of food.

2. *Avoid fanaticism.* By fanaticism we do not mean rational enthusiasm, but a species of religious insanity, or extravagant notions which are equally at variance with revelation and mental sobriety. As the human mind, even in its renewed state, is sometimes enslaved and

harassed by this kind of delusion, a word of caution will not be deemed superfluous. Some years ago, I was surveying the ancient monuments of the dead in Canterbury cathedral. I observed one which was rudely adorned with gaudy colours, and inquired in whose memory it was erected. A grave, matronly looking female gave me the name of the *saint*, and added, that he tried to imitate our blessed Lord in his forty days' fast, but died just before he had completed his task!! "Poor man," I replied, "he might well die!" when she darted such a look as seemed to express her astonishment at my supposed irreverence for the sainted dead. In the county of Durham I knew a very pious, but ill-advised young man, who informed me that he had been reduced to such a state of weakness by frequent and long-continued fasting, to which he had been recommended by a fanatical class-leader, that he was scarcely able to perform the ordinary duties of his vocation. "All," says an eminent Protestant divine, "who by immoderate superstitious fastings, macerations of the body, and wilful neglect, destroy or abridge life, are murderers; whatever a false religion, and ignorant superstitious priests, may say of them, God will not have murder for sacrifice." Fanaticism, therefore, in connection with fasting, is the first rock on which we admonish you not to strike. If you are sailing in that perilous direction, put about your helm, and stand out to sea. The nature of the ceremony should be clearly understood. We ought not to attach to it any mysterious or supernatural efficacy. The abstract thing itself, in a moral point of view, is entirely inefficacious. It is neither grace, nor an infallible means of grace. If rested in as an end, or as a certain mode of securing the favour of God, instead of ministering instrumentally to our spiritual advantage it only cherishes error and delusion.

3. *Guard against hypocrisy.* It was usual for the Pharisees to fast for purposes of dissimulation. Hence our Lord says, "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast." They were not really penitent for their sins, nor were they earnestly desirous to obtain forgiveness and salvation from God. But they wished to appear so; and consequently tried to counterfeit genuine godliness as adroitly as they could. But they often overacted their part, and rendered themselves ridiculous. They treated personal cleanliness and order with negligence. They put on sad and demure countenances. Their general demeanour was characterized by studied austerity and gloom. But why all this affectation? Because they wished men to know that they were abstaining from food. As every species of feigned piety is an abomination to God, He necessarily regards pharisaical fasting with abhorrence.

4. *Shun profanity.* It is to be deplored deeply that there are to be found, even among professors of religion, persons who turn fasting into an occasion of licentiousness. On this grave subject they are not afraid to express themselves in the most irreverent and flippant manner. Ask a professor of this class whether he will unite with you in fasting and prayer for some religious purpose. "Yes," he replies, "I will fast when I can get nothing to eat." And thus treats the question with foolish jesting and profane wit. Of all diverting expressions, those are the most offensive and reprehensible which are associated with the Bible. No subject which the Holy Scriptures mention with approbation should be treated with levity. The position of the religious jester is in close proximity to the seat of the scorner. The man who sports with

sacred things, laughs at his own folly and glories in his shame.

Others associate fasting with profane conduct. The form of godliness is observed; but the spirit and design of the institution are overlooked and treated with practical contempt. For such inconsistency, on these solemn occasions, the ancient Jews were severely reproved by the prophet Isaiah. "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high," lviii. 3, 4. These prophetic rebukes are but too applicable to multitudes in our own times, who bear the Christian name. Instead of observing fast days as seasons of deep humiliation before God, and earnest prayer for mercy and grace, they regard them as holidays, and holidays of indolence and dissipation. In instances innumerable the fast is turned into a feast. The special season for self-abasement, supplication, and abstinence, is irreverently converted into a special season for rioting, drunkenness and self-indulgence. On the most solemn fast days, employers treat the appointment, by whomsoever made, with perfect indifference, not to say deliberate contempt, and exact from all persons in their service, the usual amount of labour. "Others," says Dr. A. Clarke, "use fast days for the purpose of settling their accounts, posting up their books, and drawing out their bills, to be ready to collect their debts. These are sneaking hypocrites; those are daringly irreligious." Others again fast for strife and debate. Alas! how frequently is this the case. Whole nations are required by their respective governments to fast and implore the blessing of God on their war-like operations which are carried on against

each other with emotions and circumstances of cruelty and revenge, which betray but too evidently, the secret springs of ambition, jealousy, retaliation. In such fasts, so far as the parties to whom we have alluded are concerned, is it likely that the beneficent Governor of the universe can have any pleasure? Impossible. How then should fasting be observed to be edifying?

1. *Fasting should be observed intelligently.* The true character of the rite should be clearly understood. If rested in as a certain mode of saving intercourse with God, delusion is the inevitable consequence. See division II. of this chapter.

2. *The design of fasting should be definitely fixed.* A specific object should be selected and placed distinctly before the mind. The reason, too, for the observance should be understood, and kept steadily in view. What the object ought to be in every case, it is impossible for any author to determine, or even to suggest. It may be with propriety for the mortification of the flesh, chastisement for sin committed, or profound humiliation before God with a view to invigorate our faith, promote our growth in holiness, and increase the efficacy of our prayers and efforts, whether in behalf of ourselves or others.

3. *Fasting should be moderate.* If it be excessive it will greatly diminish muscular strength and nervous energy; and enfeeble the powers of the mind. Remember, monkish austerity is not Christian self-denial. But it is closely allied to the self-tortures of Buddhism and Hindoo Faquirism. If it is on one hand a sin to make the belly our god, and to feed ourselves without fear; on the other hand it is a sin to impair our health and shorten our days, by rejecting that quantity and kind of nourishment which

are necessary to repair the decay of nature. Fasting therefore should be governed by enlightened discretion.

4. *Fasting ought to be observed with wonted cheerfulness in company.* In privacy with God, the soul may discreetly and profitably collect itself into a state of special solemnity; but in converse with men extraordinary gravity is not commendable. On this point hear what our Lord says: "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." The hypocrite very frequently feels the difficulty of his position. He has voluntarily imposed on himself the arduous task of personating a man of God—a character to which he is an experimental stranger. He deliberately resolves to pass himself off for a saint, and to affect a state of piety which he neither enjoys nor desires to possess. Consequently, the part which he has to act is very critical. Of this fact he is perfectly conscious. If his hypocrisy stalks abroad unobserved by others, it is distinctly visible to his own mental perception, and stings his conscience with poignant reproach. This is one reason, doubtless, why his efforts at imitation are sometimes awkwardly performed, and why his copies are no better than uncouth caricatures of the beautiful original. Now he drops far short—then he goes far beyond the object at which he aims. By these egregious blunders he betrays his duplicity, and exposes himself to ridicule and abhorrence. Such was the conduct of the Pharisees. As they had no godly sorrow at heart, they substituted appearance for reality. They put on a sad countenance, and paraded personal filth and slovenliness, instead of cultivating the principles and developing the fruits of sincere and genuine piety. In the Roman Catholic Church

self-imprisonment within monasteries and nunneries, demure countenances, torturing penance, hungry appetites, and filthy rags, have been extolled to heaven as brilliant proofs of high-toned piety. Against such fasting and severe asceticism our Lord cautions us. He would have us hang out no signals to *men* that we are afflicting our souls ; but to wash and dress in our ordinary manner. To affect nothing, but to worship God in spirit and in truth, that we may be favoured by Him with richer communications of grace, and be more extensively useful in promoting His glory.

V. *Fasting and prayer, when observed properly, are followed by beneficial results.* Our Lord, after having instructed his disciples how to fast, assures them that if they duly observe His instructions, God will bless them with a reward. (Matt. vi. 17, 18.) This, we think, is a clear proof that fasting is perfectly consistent with the pure and spiritual nature of the Christian religion. Our heavenly Father never rewards that which he merely tolerates. But what He both encourages and rewards, must be acceptable to Him, and beneficial to His people. On various extraordinary occasions, fasting has been followed by uncommon manifestations of Divine favour. Let the following instances suffice :—

1. The first account we have in the Bible of a people's fasting religiously, with a view to obtain help from God, is recorded in the Book of Judges xx. 26. The tribes of Israel with an armed force four hundred thousand strong, had fought two pitched battles with the tribe of Benjamin, whose army consisted of twenty-six thousand men that drew swords, and seven hundred expert slingers. Notwithstanding the vast disproportion in favour of Israel, the Benjamites completely defeated them in both engagements, and strewed the battle-field with forty thousand of the

enemy's troops. The children of Israel had humiliating proof that the race was not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Under this impression they went to the house of God, and wept before the Lord, and fasted till evening, and offered sacrifices, and asked counsel of the Lord. And the Lord said, Go up to battle against the Benjamites ; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. Israel went up against Benjamin, and nearly exterminated the entire tribe. The Benjamites had committed an abominable crime, and God visited them with a terrible chastisement. But the *eleven* tribes were not a match for *one* tribe till they humbled themselves before God by prayer and fasting.

2. In connection with fasting, Nineveh was saved from impending ruin. The prophet Jonah, under the impulse of Divine inspiration, predicted the overthrow of the city after the expiration of forty days. This alarming prediction was delivered in an absolute form. No terms of reconciliation are recorded in the prophecy. Conditions were, nevertheless, implied. If the moral attributes of God were mutable, He might publish promises and threatenings without any regard to the state of human minds ; but as He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, He either expressly or by implication, reserves to Himself the right to fulfil His promises or to execute His threatenings, according to the conduct of those to whom they are especially made. In this sense the prediction of Jonah was interpreted by the King of Nineveh. He hoped that the threatened ruin of his capital was not inevitable, and consequently in conjunction with his principal ministers of state, he proclaimed a general fast, descended from his throne, laid aside his robes of royalty, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat down in ashes. In connection with this

extraordinary act of personal humiliation, he exhorted his people to cry mightily to God, to turn from their evil deeds, and encouraged them to hope that God would turn away His fierce anger, and repeal the dreadful sentence which He had proclaimed against them. The means employed were successful. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He said He would do unto them; and He did it not." This is a striking instance of the efficacy of prayer and fasting. Nor is it less so, because the parties who were benefited by these means of grace were uncircumcised heathens.

3. Daniel the prophet informs us, chap. ix. 2, he understood by books that the period foretold by Jeremiah, when the Jews should be released from the Babylonish captivity, was near at hand. Deeply impressed with this absorbing question, he sighed for the restoration of his people to their beloved Canaan, and for the rescue of Jerusalem from her seventy years' desolation. Strongly excited by these holy and patriotic emotions, how did he act? He set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." (verse 3.) While Daniel thus agonized with God for supernatural instruction respecting the burden of his prayer, Gabriel appeared to him and said, "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved, therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision," &c. (verses 21-27.) This supernatural communication implies the Divine approval of the means which the prophet employed to procure the revelation.

4. Haman, goaded on by ambition and revenge, calumniated the Jews to Ahasuerus, king of Persia. By this

impious plot he obtained a royal decree for their total extermination throughout the Persian empire. When Mordecai the Jew, whose inflexible adherence to the law of his God had probably kindled the ire of Haman, understood what was determined against his nation, "he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. By a singular providence, Esther, the cousin and adopted child of Mordecai had been recently elevated to the rank of Queen. The perilous position of the Jews is explained to her by her foster-father, who forewarns her that her dignity will not afford her any protection, should the general massacre plotted by Haman not be prevented. Through the medium of Hatach, the Queen's attendant, Mordecai entreated her to present a petition to the king in behalf of her oppressed people. Against this course a barbarous statute presented a formidable difficulty. No person, whether man or woman, might venture into the presence of the sovereign uninvited, without incurring the penalty of death. Esther had not received such an invitation for thirty days. She could not, therefore, present herself before the king without exposing herself to the greatest jeopardy. She nevertheless yielded to the importunity of Mordecai, and undertook the perilous task. But with a view to ensure her personal safety, and the success of her enterprise, she required all the Jews in Shushan to unite with her and her maidens in a solemn fast. Having thus committed her cause to God, Esther ventured to appear uncalled in the presence of her despotic lord. Prayer and

fasting prevailed. The God of her fathers protected her from harm. The monarch held out to her the golden sceptre of grace, and honoured her with signal marks of his affection and favour. "Then the king said unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." The tide now turns in favour of the trembling queen and her terrified people. The conspirator is confounded, and stumbles into the pit which he dug for the innocent. The haughty and spiteful Haman is hanged on his own gallows. And although the cruel edict against the Jews is not formally repealed at the suit of Esther, they are authorised by a royal decree to stand in their own defence against every aggressor.

5. Concerning the prophets and teachers who were in the Church at Antioch, and who "ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away." Acts xiii. 1—3. From this brief narrative we learn that fasting was associated with one of the most important interpositions of the Holy Spirit on record—the call of Barnabas and Saul to the gospel ministry. Fasting was again associated with their formal ordination to this great and responsible work. Let no one therefore treat fasting with banter or contempt. On the other hand, let it never be separated from deep and intelligent piety.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SABBATH.

I. The Sabbath was instituted in Paradise. This view of it disputed by Dr. Paley. 1. Time was divided into weeks of seven days under the patriarchal dispensation. 2. The seventh day was early regarded by many different nations as a sacred day. II. The Sabbath is an institution of universal obligation. 1. The Sabbath was made for man. 2. Man needs the Sabbath. 3. The Sabbath occupies a place in the Decalogue. 4. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. III. The Sabbath is a permanent institution. 1. All the reasons assigned for its universal obligation may be advanced in support of its permanent character. 2. The Sabbath is a typical institution. 3. A law once enacted, remains in force till it is repealed by proper legislative authority. 4. Under every dispensation, among all nations, and throughout all time, it is a glorious fact that God created the heavens and the earth, and ceased to create on the seventh day. 5. The distinction between the moral and ceremonial laws must not be overlooked.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."—Exodus xx. 8.

I. LET us inquire into the original institution of the Sabbath.

Sabbath is a Hebrew term, the radical meaning of which is rest or cessation from work. On the seventh day of the Mosaic account of the creation God rested from all His work, which He created to do. So far as human observation and experience extend, they corroborate this testimony. Although God continues to govern the planet on which we live, with all its furniture, animate and inanimate; and although He is constantly modifying, organizing, and dissolving the constituent elements of the original creation, we have no evidence that He continues to exert His creative energy, in the primitive sense of the expression. In this peculiar sense He ceased from

all His work on the seventh day. "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Gen. ii. 2, 3. God also blessed the seventh day. He associated with it special favours to those who should observe it aright: and sanctified it. He separated it from the other six days, and set it apart as a day of religious and weekly observance. The Sabbath, therefore, is an institution which dates from the first week of the creation. To this view of the subject several objections have been offered. At this we are not surprised. Atheists deny the being of God. Philosophers and bishops have denied their own material existence, and resolved the visible and tangible creation into a world of impressions and ideas. It is therefore not surprising that the paradisaical origin of the Sabbath has been called in question. Archdeacon Paley was a shrewd and learned writer, and in different departments of literature he rendered good service to the cause of Christianity. But he sometimes erred egregiously. On the original institution of the Sabbath, we think his reasoning is fallacious; and many travellers, overrating the skilfulness of their guide, confidently follow in his track. Dr. Paley believes that the original institution of the Sabbath is recorded in Exodus xvi. 22-30. "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, to-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord," &c. To this objection we reply,

1. *Time was divided into weeks of seven days each, before the occurrence of the transactions which are narrated in the passage just cited from Exodus.* God finished the

work of creation in six days, and rested on the seventh from His creative work. Noah "stayed yet other seven days, and again he sent the dove out of the ark: and the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more." Gen. viii. 10-12. This is strong circumstantial evidence that the division of time into weeks of seven days obtained among the antediluvians. "Fulfil her week," said Laban to Jacob. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week. Gen. xxix. 27, 28. The original term which is here translated week, signifies a period of seven days. These events occurred 281 years before the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and the gathering of a double quantity of manna on the sixth day, as related in Exod. xvi. 22. "From time immemorial a week of seven days has been known among the Egyptians, Arabians, Indians—in a word all the nations of the east have in all ages made use of a week of seven days, for which it is difficult to account without admitting that this knowledge was derived from the common ancestors of the human race."*

2. *Time was not only divided by many different nations into weeks of seven days, but the seventh day was regarded by them as a sacred day.* This circumstance is considered by Dr. T. Dwight, as a proof that the institution of the Sabbath is coeval with the history of man. His own words are, "That it was instituted at the beginning is evident from the fact, *that other nations, who could not have derived it from Moses, regarded the seventh day as*

* Kitto's Cyclo. of Bib. Lit. Art. Sabbath.

holy." In support of his opinion he produces the following testimonies.—

Hesiod says, "the seventh day is holy."

Homer and Callimachus give it the same title.

Porphyry says, "the Phœnicians consecrate one day in seven as holy."

Linus says, "a seventh day is observed among saints, or holy people."

Lucian says, "the seventh day is given to school-boys as a holy day."

Eusebius says, "almost all philosophers, and poets, acknowledge the seventh day as holy."

Josephus says, "no city of Greeks or barbarians, can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh day's rest from labour."

Tibullus says, "the seventh day, which is kept holy by the Jews, is also a festival of the Roman women." It will scarcely be supposed that the practice of sanctifying the seventh day by these several nations was the result of mere accident. And if it were not derived from the Jews, which President Dwight says was certainly not the case, the only rational inference is, that it was received by tradition by Noah and his family, who in their turn, derived it from Adam, through the medium of the antediluvian patriarchs.

II. THE SABBATH IS AN INSTITUTION OF UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION.

Some respectable authorities have regarded the Sabbath as a Jewish institution exclusively. Among the ancient fathers, we are informed, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Tertullian were of this opinion. But the fathers were not infallible interpreters of the word of God. In modern times, too, a few great names have contended

that Christians are exempt from obligation to religiously observe the Sabbath. Calvin embraced this notion, and classified the Sabbath with those carnal ordinances of the Jewish religion which our Lord abrogated. The same sentiment is taught by Paley. Great stress is laid on Col. ii. 16. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." We believe the apostle is here speaking, not of the Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath, at all; but either of the Jewish Sabbath generally, or of particular Sabbaths, which the Jews celebrated with peculiar solemnity; or of certain (other) days in the Jewish Church which were likewise called in the Law, Sabbaths, because they were observed with peculiar sanctity. These Sabbaths Christians were under no obligation to observe. In favour of the universal obligation of mankind to sanctify the Sabbath or Lord's day, it may be contended.

1. *The Sabbath was made for man.* Mark ii. 27. That is not for the Jewish nation only, but for mankind of every nation, people, and tongue. So, at least, we understand the expression. Had it been designed for the Jews exclusively, we think other languages would have been employed to express what was intended. The generic term *Man* comprehends the entire human race.

2. *Man needs the Sabbath, or a weekly rest.* Physically, mentally, morally, the human race is vastly benefited by a proper observance of the Sabbath. It is as great a blessing to the Gentile as it is to the Jew. And why should it not be so?

3. *The Sabbath occupies a place in the Decalogue, which God wrote with His own finger on the tables of stone.* Had it been found only among the ceremonial regulations, we should, of course, have inferred its application to the

Jewish nation and the Mosaic Dispensation only. But it forms one of the ten laws of the moral code. And we are informed that Jesus Christ "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." Matt. v. 17. But how is this law to escape destruction if it be disannulled? If the sanctification of the Sabbath is to be repealed with the ceremonial law, while the other nine laws of the moral table remain in their original force, how can every command of the decalogue be obeyed? But our Lord says, "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 18.

4. *The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.* He originally blessed and sanctified it. He had power to abrogate it, either partially or entirely, if He saw it proper to do so. But did he exercise this power? Did he teach His disciples that the institution was purely Mosaic, and that they had nothing to do with it? We have no where in the gospel any intimation of the kind. He reproved the Pharisees for their superstitious observance of the Sabbath, but we no where read that He informed them they were released from observing it at all. From these considerations we infer that the Sabbath is an institution of universal obligation.

III. THE SABBATH IS A PERMANENT INSTITUTION.

1. *All the reasons which we have assigned for its universal obligation may be advanced in support of its permanent character.* Writers of all creeds, who reduce the Sabbath to a mere ceremonial standard, believe that it was abolished when the Levitical dispensation had run its course. But we hope we have advanced reasonable proof that the Sabbath was not a ceremonial, but a moral institution; and that it cannot innocently be removed from the

solemn and dignified position which it occupies in the Decalogue.

2. *The Sabbath is a typical institution.* To this view of the ordinance it may be objected, that it is properly commemorative of a past event, namely, of God's resting or ceasing from His creative work. If this be admitted, what then? May not an institution be both commemorative and typical? We think so. The Jewish feast of the Passover was instituted, and commanded to be observed annually by the Hebrew nation, in commemoration of the destroying angel's passing over the land of Egypt, and sparing the Israelites, while he mortally smote the first-born of the Egyptians. But did it refer to nothing else? Had it not also a typical sense? Did it not point forwards to the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God? That it was so understood by St. Paul we think is clear from 1 Cor. v. 7. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." The Sabbath, therefore, may possess both a commemorative and a typical character. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have regarded the Sabbath as a type of that present and everlasting rest which is the rich inheritance of the faithful servants of God. Chapter iv. 1—11. And "in speaking of the Sabbath, as typifying a state of blessedness in the other world," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the apostle follows the opinion of the Jews of his own and after times. The phrases the *Sabbath above*, and the *Sabbath below*, are common among the Jewish writers. Now, as all types are in force till the things signified by them take place, the universal obligation of the Sabbath remains, and will remain, while the world standeth."

3. *A law once enacted remains in force till such time as it is repealed by proper legislative authority.* The observance of the Sabbath is one of the ten commandments. It has never been repealed by the Divine Lawgiver. Consequently it is yet a living law in the Divine Statute Book, and universally binding on the human family, wherever it is made known. The omission of any reference to the Sabbath, in the few things from which the apostles required the Christians of Antioch to refrain, has been strangely construed into an argument against the abiding obligation of this institution. With equal reason men might contend that, since the Holy Ghost silently passes over many other commands in the Decalogue, we are under no moral obligation to observe them. But if such a sentiment were entertained and generally interwoven with human practice, the foundations of morality would be utterly destroyed. On points of law once enacted silence is not repeal.

4. *Under every dispensation, among all nations, and throughout all time, it is a glorious fact that God created the heavens and the earth, and ceased to create on the seventh day.* And there never has been, nor ever will be, a period when it would be improper to commemorate, in a joyful and religious manner, the glorious perfections of God, as displayed in the works of creation.

5. *The distinction between the moral and ceremonial laws must not be overlooked.* Had the Sabbath been only an institution of the ceremonial code, it would have been on a par with circumcision and sacrifices; and having served its purpose, like them it would have been abolished by the establishment of the better covenant. But it is one of the ten words which God wrote with His own finger on the tables of stone. And there it has a right to

stand until its abrogation be clearly notified to us by the Divine Legislator. Listen to His authoritative command: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." Deut. iv. 2.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH FROM THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK TO THE FIRST, AND THE PRE-EMINENTLY BENEVOLENT CHARACTER OF THE INSTITUTION.

I. The change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first. 1. This change was made in apostolic times, and apparently with the sanction of Christ. 2. Our Lord conferred special honour on the Christian Sabbath. 3. One of the principal designs of the Primitive Sabbath was, to afford mankind a convenient opportunity of commemorating the manifold and glorious works of creation. 4. There is an essential difference between the institution of the Sabbath, and the day on which it is to be observed. 5. The Primitive Christians kept the first day of the week as the Sabbath. II. The Sabbath is a pre-eminently benevolent institution. Man, as a physical, intellectual, and moral being, needs the Sabbath. 1. To working-men, whose employment requires ordinary physical exertion, the Sabbath is necessary to healthy and buoyant existence. Investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons. The testimony of John Richard Farre, M.D. The sentiment of Dr. Farre corroborated by the New Haven Medical Association, U. S. 2. To man, considered in an intellectual point of view, the Sabbath is an inestimable boon. Sabbath desecration by intellectual toil, tends to mental derangement. Instances adduced. 3. The Sabbath is necessary for man as a moral and responsible agent. 4. The profanation of the Sabbath, whether voluntary or compulsory, is usually associated with other vices. This statement confirmed by the confessions of criminals. 5. Social misery, if not the constant companion, is the ordinary attendant on a disregard for the Sabbath. Opinion of Mr. Edward Baines. 6. Sabbath desecration is prejudicial to national stability and progress.

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”—Mark ii. 27, 28.

I. HAVING contended for the Divine origin, the universality, and the perpetual continuance of the Sabbath, it is now a proper question, whether or not is it right to transfer to the first day of the week the sanctity and obligations of the ancient Jewish Sabbath. It ought to be admitted, without

the slightest reserve or a moment's hesitation, that the change should not be countenanced unless it be sanctioned by the same authority by which the original law was enacted. The laws of Jehovah are universally binding on the human conscience. They can neither be repealed nor modified by man. In defence of the change of which we are speaking, we may remark,

1. *If the change in question was not made by the express command or permission of Christ, it appears to have been made in the apostolic times, and with His approbation.* Bishop Horsley says, "The alteration seems to have been made by the authority of the apostles, and to have taken place the very day in which our Lord arose (from the dead); for on that day the apostles were assembled, and on that day sevensnight they were assembled again. The celebration of these two Sundays was honoured by our Lord's presence." The miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was also on the first day of the week, when the disciples of Christ were assembled in one place to worship God. St. Paul, instructing the Corinthian Church as to the proper method of making and forwarding contributions for the poor, says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the *first day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) It appears that the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, was the day on which the Churches of Galatia and Corinth held their principal religious meetings. The same custom doubtless prevailed in Christian Churches generally. This is a strong argument in favour of the apostolic origin of the Christian Sabbath. And the apostles

acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The validity of the argument is strongly supported by the circumstances in the Jewish Church, on which the apostle based his instructions. "It was a regular custom of the Jews," says Dr. A. Clarke, "to make their collections for the poor on the Sabbath-day."

2. *Our Lord conferred special honour on the Christian Sabbath.* Early on the morning of that day He rose from the dead. On that day He appeared five separate times to His disciples. On that day He baptized them with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and endued them with miraculous gifts. If we do not say that these circumstances stamp the change of the Sabbath with His formal approval, we cannot but regard them as countenancing the alteration.

3. *One of the principal designs of the primitive Sabbath was, to afford mankind a convenient opportunity of commemorating the manifold and glorious works of creation.* But in the figurative language of the Bible, the work of redemption by Jesus Christ is designated the new creation, and set in favourable contrast with the old creation. In Isaiah lxxv. 17, 18, God says, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind (or, as it is in the Hebrew, come upon the heart). But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." The prophecy doubtless refers to the grand and glorious renovation of human beings in gospel times. The transformation of the inner man is distinctly compared, in the New Testament, with the original work of creation. "If any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature;" or, as the original phrase (*kaine ktisis*) signifies, a new creation: "old things are passed

away ; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) A similar form of expression is employed by the apostle in Gal. vi. 15, to express the same idea : " For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." *Alla kaine ktisis—but a new creation.* And in Eph. ii. 10 : " For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," &c. Our new creation is the glorious effect of the power and grace of God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. In allusion to the Sabbath appointed when God rested on the seventh day from all His works, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, " He that is entered into his rest " (that is, Christ) " hath also ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (iv. 10, 11.) The points of comparison to which our attention is here called are (1) the original material creation and the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. (2) The rest of God after the work of creation was finished, and the rest of Christ after He had completed the work of redemption. Now, as the primitive Sabbath was instituted the first day after the *old* creation, so the Christian Sabbath is instituted the first day after the *new* creation. And as the work of redemption, in glory and importance, vastly transcends the work of creation, it seems reasonable that the Christian Sabbath should take precedence of the primitive Sabbath.

4. *There is an essential difference between the institution of the Sabbath, and the day on which it is to be observed.* The same twenty-four hours which constituted the Sabbath in Paradise would not constitute the Sabbath in every other part of the globe. As the position of the earth, in rela-

tion to the sun, is constantly changing, the length of the day is different in different latitudes, and the hours of the day are different in different longitudes. It is, consequently, impossible for nations and tribes who inhabit different lines of latitude and meridians of longitude, to observe precisely the same twenty-four hours as the Sabbath. But in every region of the earth where mankind may fix their habitations, a Sabbath, or a seventh portion of their time, may be kept holy. It is worthy of special remark, that God has not stated at what hour the Sabbath is to commence. The institution is one thing—the precise time of observing it is another thing. But a day of twenty-four hours out of every one hundred and sixty-eight, ought to be observed as a holy Sabbath.

5. *The Primitive Christians kept the first day of the week as the Sabbath.* The learned Church historian, Dr. Mosheim, says, “All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the Church of Jerusalem (observe, not the Church of Rome), was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian Churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible witnesses.” (Eccl. Hist. Cent. I. Ch. iv., par. 4.) Now, Jesus Christ “is Lord of the Sabbath;” and His own example, after His resurrection—His promise to lead His disciples into all truth—their being baptized with the Holy Ghost on the first day of the week—their actual inspiration—their observance of the first day of the week as the Sabbath, and encouraging other Christians to do the same thing—

these facts, in connection with others, and our reasonings thereon, afford as substantial proof as can be rationally desired, that the change of the Sabbath is in accordance with the will of God.

II. *The Sabbath is a pre-eminently benevolent institution.* Whether man be contemplated as a physical, intellectual, or moral being ; or as possessing all these properties combined,—he needs a Sabbath, and for his benefit the Sabbath was instituted. “If man had a mere animal existence,” says Mr. Edward Baines, “the religious Sabbath might be defended as one of the most benignant of the Divine institutions. If he were a being of mere intelligence, it might equally be vindicated, as giving to reason the leisure it requires for the highest and noblest themes on which it can be employed. But when we regard him as endowed with an immortal nature, and being here, on the probationary threshold of a life that can never end, a religious Sabbath assumes an importance which words cannot describe.” Although the observance or non-observance of the Sabbath is not to be regulated by the laws of self-preservation, or profit and loss, nevertheless an appeal to these laws may have considerable weight with some men, who are not yet disposed to listen to arguments of a higher order. Hence—

1. *To working men, whose employment requires ordinary physical exertion, the Sabbath is necessary to healthy and buoyant existence.* Constant toil would grind down the strongest constitution, and bring it to a premature grave. Take the following facts:—(1.) “In the year 1832 the British House of Commons appointed a committee to investigate the effects of labouring seven days in a week, compared with those of labouring only six, and resting one. That committee consisted of the following distin-

guished gentlemen :—Sir Andrew Agnew, Sir Robert Peel, Sir Robert Inglis, Sir Thomas Baring, Sir George Murray, Fowell Buxton, Lord Morpeth, Lord Ashley, Lord Viscount Sandon, and twenty other members of Parliament. They examined a great number of witnesses of various professions and employments. Among them was John Richard Farre, M.D., of London, of whom they speak as ‘an acute and experienced physician.’ The following is the testimony of Dr. Farre :—‘ I have practised as a physician between thirty and forty years ; and during the early part of my life, as the physician of a public institution, I had charge of the poor in one of the most populous districts of London. I have had occasion to observe the effect of the observance and non-observance of the seventh day of rest during this time. I have been in the habit, during a great many years, of considering the uses of the Sabbath, and of observing its abuses. The abuses are chiefly manifested in labour and dissipation. Its use, medically speaking, is that of a day of rest. As a day of rest, I view it as a day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body under continued labour and excitement. A physician always has respect to the preservation of the restorative power, because if once this be lost, his healing office is at an end. A physician is anxious to preserve the balance of circulation, as necessary to the restorative power of the body. The ordinary exertions of man run down the circulation every day of his life ; and the first general law of nature, by which God prevents man from destroying himself, is the alternating of day and night, that repose may succeed action. But, although the night apparently equalizes the circulation, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a long life. Hence, one day in

seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect, by its repose, the animal system. I consider, therefore, that, in the bountiful provision of Providence for the preservation of human life, the Sabbathical appointment is not, as it has been sometimes theologically viewed, simply a precept partaking of the nature of a political institution, but that it is to be numbered amongst the natural duties,—if the preservation of natural life be admitted to be a duty, and the premature destruction of it a suicidal act.’”

The sentiments of Dr. Farre are corroborated by the New Haven Medical Association, United States. “At a regular meeting of the said association, composed of twenty-five physicians, among whom were the professors of the Medical Collegē, the following questions were considered:—

1. Is the position taken by Dr. Farre, in his testimony before the Committee of the British House of Commons, in your view, correct?

2. Will men who labour but six days in a week be more healthy, and live longer, other things being equal, than those who labour seven?

3. Will they do more work, and do it in a better manner?

The vote on the above was *unanimously in the affirmative*; signed by Eli Ives, Chairman, and Pliny A. Jewett, Clerk.” Respectable testimonies to the same effect might be multiplied to a great extent. The institution of the Sabbath is in harmony with this physical fact. Let the man, therefore, who would enjoy life and see many days refrain from violating the sanctity of the holy Sabbath.

2. *To man, considered in an intellectual point of view, the Sabbath is an inestimable boon.* The brain is the organ

of thought, but it can no more think without effort than a hammer can be wielded by the hand without the tension of muscles. And the nervous energy of the brain can be as easily exhausted by over exertion, as the muscular strength of the arm by the same means. It is no uncommon occurrence for mental drudges to enfeeble, or even to completely derange their intellectual faculties, by excessive study. God has so constituted man's intellectual nature, that it is incapable of incessant toil. It requires periodical repose or diversion from its wonted labour. Consequently, the Sabbath cannot be devoted to ordinary work with impunity. The law of the Sabbath is HOLY, JUST, and GOOD. He who presumes to violate it must suffer the penalty. The way of transgressors is hard. "A distinguished merchant, who for twenty years did a vast amount of business, remarked to Dr. Edwards, 'Had it not been for the Sabbath, I have no doubt I should have been a maniac long ago.' This was mentioned in a company of merchants, when one remarked, 'That is the case exactly with Mr. ——. He was one of our greatest importers. He used to say that the Sabbath was the best day in the week to plan successful voyages; showing that his mind had no Sabbath. He has been in the Insane Hospital for years, and will probably die there.' Such cases are so numerous that a British writer remarks, 'We never knew a man work seven days in a week, who did not kill himself, or kill his mind.' " To these testimonies we may add that of Thomas Sewell, M.D., Professor of Pathology and the Practice of Medicine in the Columbian College, Washington, U.S. "While I consider it the more important design of the institution of the Sabbath to assist in religious devotion, and advance men's spiritual welfare, I have long held the opinion, that one of its chief benefits has reference to his

physical and intellectual constitution; affording him, as it does, one day in seven for the renovation of his exhausted energies of body and mind."

3. *The Sabbath is necessary for man as a moral and responsible agent.*

1. Man is a fallen, polluted, ignorant creature. He needs instruction respecting the things which belong to his present and everlasting salvation.

2. Necessary means of instruction are provided by the Lord, the principal of which are the holy Scriptures and a preached gospel.

3. Frequent intervals of rest from secular labour are indispensable to allow him an opportunity of using these divinely appointed means to profit. "Search the Scriptures," says our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." (John v. 39.) "Faith cometh by hearing," says the apostle, "and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. x. 17.) But how can a man search the Scriptures and attend the house of God, if he keeps no Sabbath? Instruction to the labouring classes on a large scale must be public. Private instruction would require too many instructors and involve too much expense. But if instruction be public it must be given on a day, and at a place, when and where mankind, by common consent, have agreed to assemble for the purpose of receiving it. But were there no Sabbath sanctioned by legal authority, avaricious employers would reluctantly grant to their servants and work-people the privilege of assembling frequently for public religious instruction. This is evident from the fact that, although the divine obligation of the Sabbath is admitted by the people and government of this country, yet tens of thousands of the labouring poor are absolutely required to

perform 'unnecessary work' on the Lord's day, on pain of being deprived of their employment and bread. From this existing cruelty it is easy to foresee to what oppressive bondage and ignorance the toiling masses would be doomed if the fences of the Sabbath were broken down.

4. *The profanation of the Sabbath, whether voluntary or compulsory, is usually associated with other vices.* The periodical recurrence of every seventh day, as a holy season, if it be only *decently* observed, operates as a powerful check to immorality. On the other hand, where the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, or turned into a day of idleness and recreation, ungodliness is rife and rampant. The criminal statistics of Christian England are fearfully swelled by those persons of both sexes, who observe no day of sacred rest. These arguments are confirmed by the following facts :

(1.) "A gentleman of this country, who was in the habit, for more than twenty years, of daily visiting convicts, states that, almost universally, when brought to a sense of their condition, they lamented their neglect of the Sabbath, and pointed to their violation of it as the principal cause of their ruin. He has attended three hundred and fifty at the place of execution, when they were put to death for their crimes ; and nine out of ten, who were brought to a sense of their condition, attributed the greater part of their departure from God to *their neglect of the Sabbath.*

(2.) "Another English gentleman, who was conversant with prisoners for more than thirty years, testifies that he found in all his experience, both with regard to those who had been capitally convicted and those who had not, that they referred to the violation of the Sabbath as *the chief cause of their crimes* ; and that this has been confirmed by

all the opportunities he has had of examining prisoners."

(3.) An English "warden, who had had charge of more than one hundred thousand prisoners, and had taken special pains to ascertain the causes of their crimes, says, that he does not recollect a single case of capital offence where the party had not been a Sabbath breaker. In many cases the prisoners assured him that Sabbath breaking was the first step in their downward course. Indeed, he says, with reference to prisoners of all classes, *nineteen out of twenty have neglected the Sabbath and other ordinances of religion.*" Nor are these statements and admissions peculiar to the history of English criminals. Corresponding testimonies are supplied by the same department of American history. "Of twelve hundred and thirty-two convicts who had been committed to the Auburn State prison previously to the year of 1838, four hundred and forty-seven had been watermen, either boatmen or sailors, men who, to a great extent, had been kept at work on the Sabbath, and thus deprived of the rest and privileges of that day. Of those 1,230 convicts, only twenty-six had conscientiously kept the Sabbath." Many other kindred testimonies may be found in "*Arvine's Anecdotes*," edited by Mr. John Flesher, from which the above valuable extracts are borrowed.

5. *Social misery, if not the constant companion, is the ordinary attendant on a disregard for the Sabbath.* Husbands and fathers who have no reverence for the Lord's-day, have seldom an affectionate and intelligent regard for the comfort and respectability of their wives and children. On this subject, my own sentiments are expressed in the forcible language of Mr. E. Baines: "Believing, as I do with all my mind and soul, that a pious and well-trained family in humble life, is one of the greatest ornaments,

blessings, and safeguards of society, the very salt of the earth, I court for the working classes at large every opportunity and encouragement for a peaceful, well-spent Sabbath. But what hope can we have of that if inducements are multiplied for parents to leave the sanctuary, and for children to leave the Sunday-school; if the only day free from the interruptions and frettings of worldly care, and therefore the only day suitable for quiet reading, serious thought, parental instruction, and family devotion, is to be a day of rambling, sight-seeing, and carousing? My profound conviction is, that the very best thing for health, as well as for moral and religious improvement, is the peaceful, soothing, elevating employment of a religiously spent Sabbath. I believe that calm is more needed than exercise—that the sanctuary is far better than the steamboat or the railway train—that the sweet psalmody of the house of prayer infinitely excels the din of military music, and that a man at his own table, with his wife by his side, his children around his knees, and telling them the matchless stories of the Divine book, is ten thousand times better, safer, and happier than he who roves with doubtful company, drops in at public houses, spends there the money which ought to be spent at home, and returns late at night with clouded faculties to a neglected family.”

6. *Sabbath desecration is prejudicial to national stability and progress.* It is a divine maxim, that “righteousness exalteth a nation, but one sinner destroyeth much good.” National uprightness and piety are rewarded with national blessings; national sins are punished with national stripes. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” But it is well known that Sabbath-breakers are usually distinguished for their lack of religious reverence. “The fear of God is not before their eyes.” Their moral career is

one bold and continuous course of rebellion against God—a firm and habitual contempt of His revealed will. And will not God be avenged on such a nation as this? Will He not visit with the rod for these things? Unto His people Israel God said, “When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard.” At the same time He forewarned them that disobedience would be visited with banishment and dispersion among the heathen. They presumed to rebel, notwithstanding, and incurred the threatened penalty. (Lev. xxv. 2—4, xxvi. 33—35.) “From Saul to the Babylonish captivity are numbered about 490 years, during which period there were *seventy sabbaths* of years; for 7 multiplied by 70 are equal to 490. Now, the Babylonish captivity lasted *seventy years*, and during that time the land of Israel rested. Therefore the land rested just as many years in the Babylonish captivity as it should have rested Sabbatic years if the Jews had observed the law relative to the Sabbaths of the land.”—*Houbigant*. This remarkable fact shows that “verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth,” that He records with unerring precision the transactions of mankind, and that He is ever able to reward the wicked according to their works.

The National Assembly of infidel France endeavoured to obliterate the recollection of the Christian Sabbath from the mind of man, and divided time into *decades*, and ordained that every tenth day should be observed as a day of relaxation, dissipation, and merriment. But hardened

in crime as the nation was, she was glad to repeal her infidel law, and to re-establish a seventh-day Sabbath. The laws of God cannot be amended by human legislators. Their wisdom and security lie, not in repealing, modifying, or violating, what the Supreme Lawgiver has enacted, but in reverently submitting to His omnipotent authority.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW THE SABBATH OUGHT TO BE OBSERVED.

The sanctification of the Sabbath does not imply, 1. That works which are really necessary or merciful are unlawful on the Sabbath. 2. It does not imply the unlawfulness of needful repose on the Sabbath. 3. It does not exclude necessary travelling and religious instruction on the Sabbath. But it does imply, 1. Rest from ordinary employment. 2. The allowance of rest to children, servants, and labouring beasts. 3. The mind should rest from secular labour as well as the body. Abstaining from unnecessary conversation relating to worldly business. 5. Employing the day in religious exercises. 6. Abstinence from recreative amusements. 7. The religious observance of every seventh day of twenty-four hours. 8. The Sabbath should be observed with a pure desire to please and honour God. Primitive Methodists accused by newspapers of profaning the Sabbath. The charge repelled, and the Connexion vindicated. A speculator in Sabbath desecration deservedly punished by the failure of his enterprise. Eleven forms of Sabbath breaking briefly noticed. Opponents. 1. Publicans, spirit merchants, &c. 2. Drunkards, tipplers, spendthrifts, &c. 3. Keepers of tea-gardens, fruiterers, &c. 4. Railway and steam-boat companies, cab and omnibus proprietors, &c. 5. Proprietors of theatres, "halls of science," musicians, play actors, &c. 6. Time-serving politicians and gentlemen of lax religious sentiments. Several instances given. 7. Avowed infidels. Spurious Christianity. Finally, God's blessing is promised to them that religiously observe the Sabbath.

"Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee."—Deut. v. 12.

Negatively.—1. The sanctification of the Sabbath does not imply that works which are really necessary or merciful are unlawful on the Sabbath. But what are works of mercy or of necessity, in every case, it is impossible for any author to determine. Innumerable moral actions will receive their character of right or wrong from circumstances of which we have no prescience. Hence the impossibility of furnishing anything like a complete

catalogue of works which may be innocently performed on the Lord's-day. For the same reason it is our duty to acquire correct scriptural information on these points, and to cultivate tenderness of conscience, lest the dictates of ignorance and depraved nature be substituted for the voice of God. We have reason to fear that very frequently when necessity or mercy is pleaded, inclination and self-indulgence are the main springs of action.

2. It does not imply the unlawfulness of any needful repose, whether physical or mental, on the Sabbath-day. Idleness is sinful and a curse; necessary rest is innocent and a blessing.

3. It does not exclude necessary travelling and religious instruction by ministers of the Gospel and others. In Matt. xii. 5, our Lord says, "Have ye not read in the law, *how* that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbaths, and are blameless." That is, they put the Sabbath to what may be called a *common use*, by slaying and offering up sacrifices, and by doing the *services* of the temple, as on common days. But they were blameless, because the discharge of their *prescribed* duties implied the performance of the work. But

Positively.—It implies 1. Rest from ordinary employment. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work."

2. Allowing rest to children, servants, and labouring beasts. The prohibition to work on the Sabbath extends to "thy son, thy daughter, thy manservant, thy maid-servant, to thy cattle, and to thy stranger that is within thy gates." (Exod. xx. 9, 10.) An employer who refrains from work on the Sabbath himself, but who requires his servant to toil unnecessarily on this holy day, is as real

a Sabbath-breaker as if he laboured with his own hands. He is even guilty of double-dealing. For while he personally refrains from overt acts of Sabbath desecration, he encourages them in his agents, and covers his own crime with a cloak of hypocrisy.

3. The rest of the mind as well as the body from secular labour. Man looketh on the outward appearance; but God looketh at the heart. Consequently the inmost thoughts and purposes of the soul, no less than the words of our lips and the actions of our hands, ought to be governed by the law of the Sabbath.

4. Abstaining from unnecessary conversation which relates to worldly business. One of the most ordinary forms of transgressing the Sabbath law, is by indulging in secular discourse. Many persons who would unhesitatingly and firmly decline an invitation to take part in ordinary and unnecessary work on the Lord's day, are, through a defective education and the prevailing habit of society, drawn with the utmost facility into a train of worldly conversation. But words are copies of ideas. The expressions of the tongue are transcripts of thought. When therefore we hear a man on the Sabbath-day converse about secular things for secular purposes, we are confident that his heart is not right with God. Evil communications proceed out of his mouth. And it is out of the abundance of his heart that his mouth speaketh. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own soul, that man's religion is vain." James i. 26. Reader, art thou wishful to duly reverence the Sabbath? Then guard well the door of thy lips.

5. Employing the day in religious exercises—such as reading the Scriptures, prayer and meditation in private, in the family, in the social circle, and in the great congre-

gation, as health and opportunity allow ; with a view to glorify God, and to acquire increasing holiness and preparation for heaven.

6. Abstaining from every kind of recreative sports or amusements. The day is holy, and ought therefore to be devoted to holy purposes.

7. The religious observance of every seventh day of twenty-four hours. Human legislation, which allows of the profanation of the Sabbath, except during what are conventionally called " Church hours," is a wicked trifling with sacred things. One part of the day is as holy as another ; and whether the doors of the sanctuary are closed or open, mankind are bound by an eternal obligation to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.

8. All religious services on the Sabbath-day should be performed—not out of regard to human authority, national usage, or pharisaical righteousness ; but from a pure desire to please and honour the " Lord of the Sabbath," and thereby to secure His approval and blessing.

WE MAY NEXT NOTICE CERTAIN FORMS OF SABBATH DESECRATION.

1. Taking pleasure trips—whether by land or water, whatever be the mode of travelling.

2. Attending theatres, public tea-gardens, museums, and exhibitions of art.

3. Putting to sea with merchant ships, or travelling by land on worldly business.

4. Running Sabbath mails, and delivering letters.

5. Writing letters on business, taking stock, posting accounts, &c.

6. Attending to parliamentary duties which might be safely postponed to an ordinary working-day.

8. Convening assemblies and lecturing or preaching on

secular subjects. Some years ago a Mr. Finch, an infidel, preached on the Lord's day, at Wisbeach, on the excellency of socialism. The *Christian World* reports a lay sermon preached on a Sabbath evening, in October 1858, to a congregation of twelve hundred people, by a Mr. Slack, on some passage of Lord Bacon. This is a practical contempt of the entire Bible.

8. Gossiping or interchanging visits for the purpose of physical or mental recreation without any regard to moral duties.

9. Perambulating fields and parks, and surveying the crops, discoursing about the best modes of cultivating the soil, rearing stock, the state of markets, the aspect of politics, &c.

10. Travelling to religious meetings in hired conveyances, and thereby encouraging Sabbath traffic. If attending means of grace at a distance too remote for us to travel on foot, were a positive duty, we ought to avail ourselves of the least objectionable mode of conveyance. But if our attendance is optional, or at best conventional, personal gratification should be sacrificed to a sense of duty. The conductor of an omnibus was once asked by a minister of the Gospel whether he ever attended a place of worship. "No," was the cutting reply; "we are prevented by such men as you." Many years ago the Primitive Methodist Conference, deeply impressed with the vital importance of religiously observing the Sabbath, legislated to this effect for the guidance of the community. The denomination, notwithstanding, has been frequently misrepresented and charged with disregard for the sanctity of the Sabbath, through the impiety or the selfish and ungodly speculations of individuals. During the sittings of the Conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1859, that assembly learned with

deep regret that certain parties had made arrangements with the railway companies for low-priced trips to leave Durham and Hexham for Newcastle on the Sabbath morning, and announced by handbills that the said trips were provided for the special accommodation of parties who wished to attend the Conference Camp-meeting. The conduct of the unscrupulous or thoughtless speculators met with severe and merited condemnation from the Conference. Two of the delegates, Messrs. William Antliff and Robert Smith, were appointed to write to the Durham and other public Journals, for the purpose of correcting the false impression which had been made, in regard to the Sabbath views of the Community, by private speculation. One of the speculators, we were not sorry to learn, incurred a loss of about £15 by his unholy enterprise. We trust his dearly purchased experience has taught him a useful lesson.

That the Primitive Methodists, as a community, discountenance every kind of Sabbath desecration, is evident from the following extracts :—"All our members, official and unofficial, are earnestly entreated to discourage Sabbath-breaking, by refraining from travelling and working themselves, except in cases of necessity and mercy, and by discouraging public bakers and other persons from yielding to that vice." General Minutes, Consolidated, 1849. "Members of the Primitive Methodist Connexion are recommended not to travel by railway on Sabbath-days." Minute 29, 1850. They are also cautioned from year to year, a short time before the annual meeting, not to avail themselves of any commercial mode of travelling to the Conference on the Lord's day.

11. Idleness is another common form of profaning the Sabbath. While thousands desecrate this holy day, by

converting it into a season of laborious toil, multitudes profane it by degrading, animal sloth. Body, soul, and spirit, are voluntarily condemned to the most grovelling and sluggish indulgence.

Let us now glance at the different classes of opponents to the sanctification of the Sabbath. Ignorance, inconsideration, bad example, selfishness, infidelity, and general depravity of heart, are the principal sources of Sabbath desecration. But in a land like ours—a land abounding with Bibles, and illuminated to an unprecedented degree with pure gospel light—not one of these circumstances can be decently pleaded as an excuse for the sin on which we are animadverting. Is the Sabbath-breaker ignorant of the Sabbath institution, and of his obligation to observe it with religious reverence? It may be spoken to his shame. “This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” (John iii. 19, 20.) Is he inconsiderate? But *why* is he inconsiderate? Is he not capable of reflection? Does he not think and study about his secular affairs? and ought he not to ponder the paths of his feet when his footsteps are conducting him to the bar of God and his eternal destiny? Is he unduly influenced by bad example? But why does he copy the example of the wicked instead of emulating the conduct of the good? Does not God’s command possess higher authority than the example of wicked men? Thus saith the Lord, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil.” Is he impelled to do what he knows is wrong by selfishness? This is a fearful aggravation of his crime, and the rust of his ill-acquired wealth “shall be a witness against

him, and shall eat his flesh as it were fire." (James v. 3.) Covetousness is idolatry; and ye know that no idolater shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But is his heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? This, surely, is no justification of rebellion against God, any more than disaffection to good government can vindicate an insurrection. Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that desecrates the holy Sabbath. But who are the men who dare thus to set at naught the mandate of their divine legislator and judge?

1. First and foremost, publicans, spirit merchants, and all the grades of traffickers in intoxicating drinks—the favourite beverage of the most sensual and corrupt society.

2. Drunkards, tipplers, sots, blasphemers, improvident spendthrifts, and the vast tribes of dishonest persons, who would rather lavish their money on their own personal and sinful gratifications, than discharge their lawful debts. Persons of this description are always welcome in the haunts of intemperance, so long as they possess the pecuniary means of unhallowed traffic.

3. Keepers of public tea-gardens, fruiterers, &c., who, for the sake of filthy lucre, are more ready to pander to people's sinful recreations, and luxurious appetites, than to reverence the commands of God.

4. Railway companies, steam-packet companies, cab and omnibus proprietors, &c., who have no objection to accumulate gold by working their servants, and plying their trade on God's holy day, for the accommodation of the wicked and thoughtless multitude. Many of them go farther still: they advertise cheap trips, and cheap excursions, which operate as powerful allurements to the public to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. If they plead the wishes of the people as a cloak for their sins,

the validity of the plea cannot be admitted for a moment. Do their *servants* plead for Sunday traffic? No. They would be grateful for rest. And they are certainly entitled to as much consideration as are the godless masses of the community. "The day," says Mr. W. Arnot, "is offered for recreation. This proposal involves two fallacies. The first is, while it *speaks* of recreation only, it *means* recreation to one class, and unceasing toil to another, in order that the rich may make more money out of both. There is rottenness at the root of that pleasure which binds overtoiled brother-men to furnaces and engines on the Sabbath, as well as on the other days of the week. The pleasure-seeker on a Sabbath excursion, and the speculator on the dividend day, do not take into account the neglected families of the men who have ministered to their amusement or their profit—families who are deprived of a father's care, and are, in consequence, soon thrown a burden on the community. But another fallacy lies in rich men offering to the labourer a boon out of a store which is not their own. . . . Philosophy can read from the records of nature, that man cannot with impunity subject his fellow-man to unceasing toil. To overtask working men for six days, and then invite them to take physical relaxation out of the Sabbath, is a very aggravated species of swindling." July 14th, 1849, the *Leeds Mercury* reported that there were then plying in London, on the Sabbath days, 3,000 omnibuses, with 7,000 drivers and conductors. And that, "according to returns made by individuals stationed for that special purpose at the different steam-boat piers, between Chelsea and London Bridge, it was ascertained, on one Sabbath in the summer of 1849, that 324,000 landed and embarked from the steam-vessels plying between those places."

5. Proprietors of theatres, halls of science, music halls; and play actors, musicians, &c., form a numerous force from whom the Sabbath has to encounter subtle and determined opposition. In one form or another, they are all, for the time being, interested in breaking down the distinction between the Lord's-day and the six days which are appointed for secular industry.

6. Time-serving politicians and gentlemen of lax religious sentiment.

(1.) It is reported that Lord Stanley has said "He deploras the ignorance of many of our countrymen, and imputes it to the religious observance of the Sabbath." Is his lordship sincere, or is there not some mistake in the report? (2.) "Mr. Biggs, M.P.," we are informed, "alleged that Protestantism, by its strict Sabbath, drove men from its pale, and would have us take lessons from Roman Catholic countries." The suggestion might be acted on, were we merely anxious to secure numerical strength and professional preference for a Church, without any regard to vital Christianity. But if we wish to promote the glory of God and the salvation of our fellow-men, we must not adopt the Romish practice of doing evil that good may come. Genuine Christianity requires no lessons from antichrist. (3.) Sir Joshua Walmsley, it is said, "argued that irreligious men, by Sunday visits to picture galleries, would be converted from the error of their ways." But is this the case in Rome, in Florence, in Munich, in Paris, and in other continental cities, where Popery allows Sabbath amusements to the people? Are those cities holier than the cities of England and Scotland, where the Sabbath is more revered? Or do refinement and artistic taste usually go hand in hand with pure and undefiled religion? Have arts and sciences never been

prostituted to antichristian purposes? But should skillfully executed statuary and painting never be formed to originate or to cherish an indecent sentiment, we do not see how they can convince men of sin, transform their hearts, and save their souls. (4.) In the judgment of Mr. Hallam, no ecclesiastical statesman would disdain to take a lesson from the Church of Rome, "which for many ages had perceived and acted upon a principle, that it is the policy of Government to encourage a love of pastime and recreation in the people, both because it keeps them from speculating on religious and political matters, and because it renders them more cheerful and less sensible to the evils of their condition." This witness is but too true. But God says, they that "live in pleasure are dead while they live." Minds addicted to mirth and play are childish minds, and incapable of appreciating things according to their sterling value. Besides they often laugh and sing, when it would more become them to weep and pray. We should not like to incur the fearful responsibility of deliberately rocking such people to sleep in the cradle of carnal security, and thereby rendering them insensible to the evils of their condition. (5.) A Jamaican planter invited Mr. Robert Young, a distinguished missionary, to preach in his hall to his slaves. The moment the sermon was closed, the rebuked planter stood up and told his people that Mr. Young had deceived him. He had asked him to teach them industry and morality; but he had condemned things that were not bad—Sabbath work and another sin. As to the latter, he had good reasons why it was innocent; and as to the Sabbath, *it did not apply to Jamaica at all, for the fourth commandment was given before even Jamaica was discovered.* This is one way of man's wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction.

7. Avowed infidels. Being fully set in their hearts to do evil, they hate the institutions and restraints of Christianity. The Bible strikes at the root of all evil. It admits of no distinction or indulgence in favour of the rich and powerful. With God there is no respect of persons. He pronounces every one cursed who continueth not in all things written in the Divine law, to do them. And even Jesus Christ—notwithstanding his unparalleled love, compassion, and grace—came into the world to “save his people,” not *in* their sins, but “*from* their sins.” To get rid of this entire system at once, which is so irksome to the infidel, he ignores the gospel scheme of salvation. According to his irrational system, there is no Redeemer, no Sanctifier, no Revelation; consequently, no Divinely-instituted Sabbath. The French National Assembly,—who divided time into *decades*, and ordered every tenth day to be kept as a day of relaxation, dissipation, and merriment,—were a council of professed infidels. The opposition of such men to the sanctification of the Sabbath creates no surprise. It is only what we anticipate from men so thoroughly alienated from God and goodness.

8. It ought to be carefully noted that the champions of Sabbath desecration not unusually tinge their fallacious arguments with a spurious Christianity. To Mr. G. Lucas (whose speech at Newcastle-on-Tyne is reported in the *Northern Daily Express*, Feb. 18th, 1857), it “appeared plain that churches and chapels, lecture-halls, museums, literary institutes, gardens, and such like, were not antagonistic, but kindred instrumentalities. They were all aiming at the same point. They all tended to spiritualize, or enlighten, or socialize, or moralize, or in the same way to hasten on the good time coming. And he thought it

would require all those agencies, and as many more as could be originated, to reach the condition of man." Arguments of this class are not so much distinguished for depth, as they are characterized by dogmatical assurance. We should like to know when and where sinners were convinced of sin and truly converted to God; and when and where the souls of genuine Christians were increasingly sanctified by attending museums, tea-gardens, picture galleries, &c., on the Sabbath-day? But these glorious works are constantly being promoted, on a grand scale, by the scriptural institutions of the Sabbath. Shall we, then, blend light with darkness? Shall we attempt to mix iron with clay? "Woe unto them that call evil good," or who "do evil that good may come."

Finally. God's blessing is promised to them that religiously observe the Sabbath. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own (or vain) words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.) The law of God cannot be repealed by the authority of man. "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. xix. 17.) Not some of them only, but all of them. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

CHAPTER XXV.

DEVOTIONAL MUSIC—VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL.

Various opinions on church music. 1. The poetry of the Scriptures. 2. Singing was adopted from the Jewish Church by the Christian Church, from the commencement of the Christian Era. The ancient heathen attributed a powerful influence to music. John and Charles Wesley's poetic powers. The poetry and song of the Primitive Methodists. 4. The music of the sanctuary should not be perplexing and elaborate. Evils too frequently connected with choral singing. 1. Tunes are commonly selected which the congregation does not know. 2. Sound is preferred to sense, and talent to piety. The singing department of public worship is consigned too much to the choir. 4. Choirs are frequently a source of trouble, both to themselves and to churches. What can we propose as a remedy? 1. Let the music of the sanctuary be regarded theoretically as devotion. 2. Let church music be performed, not as an entertainment, but as a religious service. 3. Church music ought to be congregational. Christians should cultivate and exercise their musical talents for the glory of God. Singing is calculated to promote both physical and mental energy.

"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."—
1 Cor. xiv. 15.

THERE are few religious subjects on which there is a greater variety of opinions and more intense feeling than on Church music, whether vocal or instrumental. In calling the attention of our readers to this warmly-controverted topic, it is necessary to be extremely cautious. Whatever discretion or moderation may characterize our remarks, we dare not venture to calculate that they will meet with unanimous approval. We will strive, nevertheless, to furnish no reasonable cause for offence to any one, and at the same time to record our own sentiments without reserve. Some Christian Churches dispense with

metrical psalms and hymns, as singing forms no part of their social or public devotions. Others confine themselves to poetry which is based on Old Testament psalmody; while others draw the materials of their sacred poetry from either the Old Testament or the New, but give a decided preference to the latter. The course which is adopted by the last of these parties appears to us to be most in accordance with the character and design of the Holy Scriptures. For

I. *The Bible contains a very considerable proportion of poetry.* To ordinary readers this is not apparent, for three reasons:—

1. The original poetry of the Scriptures is concealed beneath a prosaic translation. Were English poetry subjected to the same process, it would be deprived of its exact measure and harmonious tones, and read in another tongue, like abrupt, sententious prose.

2. Much of Biblical poetry is so closely intermixed with historical narration, that it is not readily distinguished from common prose. In the original, fragments of poetry are discovered in the earliest prose compositions. The speech of Lamech to his wives (Gen. iv. 23) is delivered in measured verse. See a poetical translation in Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary.

3. The forms of Hebrew poetry were less determinate than were those of some other nations. Both their prose and poetry had a certain kind of rhythm. Their poetic rhythm was more like that of our blank verse than of our rhymed metre. Of poetical feet they appear to have known nothing. Consequently their verse must be less measured and strict. Its melody was rather that of *thought* than of art and skill—spontaneous, like their religious feelings, and therefore deep and impressive, but

less subject to law, and escaping from the hard limits of exact definition.*

The character of Hebrew poetry is widely different from that of Gentile nations. Among the classic Greeks and Romans general literature was highly cultivated, and poetry raised to the standard of perfection. But the illustrious bards of the pagan world composed their admired productions under the inspiration of a depraved and superstitious imagination. Their immortal works belong to idolatrous times and the region of fiction, and are deeply stained with sentimental vice. Without great caution, he who handles them will suffer from their deadly contagion. But Hebrew poetry, in its ordinary train of sentiment and feeling, is entirely moral, and richly impregnated with the religious element. In this respect it infinitely surpasses the finest productions of profane authors. For purity of thought and grandeur of conception, Moses, Isaiah, and St. John have no rivals in the heathen world. If Homer and Virgil surpass them in the boundless region of fiction, they excel in the sublime domain of reality and truth.

From the Bible we learn that not only the Holy Spirit inspired good men to write poetry, but that they associated singing with their religious exercises. This remark applies to both Testaments. The miraculous deliverance which God wrought out for Israel, when He conducted them safely across the Red Sea, was celebrated in a noble and highly religious song, which Moses composed for the occasion. In singing this grand national anthem the women took a part, led by Miriam, the sister of Moses. This triumphant song of Israel over Pharaoh and his host may be regarded as a type of the final rejoicing of the saints over the devil and antichrist. Then the re-

* Kitto's Cyclo. of Bib. Lit. Art. Poetry.

deemed "shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," &c. (Rev. xv. 3, 4.) If it be doubtful whether God appointed singers directly to minister in the service of the sanctuary, it must be admitted that they performed a very prominent part of public worship in the tabernacle under the reign of David.

2. Singing was adopted from the Jewish Church, by the Christian Church, from the beginning. At the celebration of the last passover at which our Lord was present, He and His disciples "sung a hymn." (Matt. xxvi. 30.) According to the united testimony of Jewish antiquity; that hymn was composed of Psalms cxiii.—cxviii. inclusive. These six psalms were always sung at every paschal solemnity. When Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi for preaching the gospel, "at midnight they prayed and sang praises." They neither murmured at their hard fate, nor submitted stoically to their sufferings. They felt as men, and rejoiced as Christians; and gave utterance to their exuberant joy in loud and cheerful notes of praise, "and their fellow-prisoners heard them." On truly sublime and exciting occasions the voice of holy song is peculiarly proper, in which to pour out the soul to God. Singing, as a means of spiritual improvement, is recommended by St. Paul. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. v. 17—19.) The same kind of exercise is recommended in his Epistle to the Colossians:—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and

spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (iii. 16.) What he taught others to observe he practised himself. "I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also." (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) To these extracts from the Gospel of Matthew, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul, we may add what St. James says, when instructing the cheerful how to give appropriate expression to their joyous emotions:—"Is any merry? let him sing psalms." (v. 13.) From these passages of New Testament scriptures it is perfectly clear that singing constituted a part of primitive Christian worship.

Vocal music is the language of feeling; and vast is the power of poetry and song. The extraordinary honours which all nations, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, have lavished on their most distinguished poets, corroborate this sentiment.

The ancient heathen ascribed irresistible and miraculous influence to music. Homer and Virgil were as much admired for their poetry, as Demosthenes and Cicero were for their eloquence. And their intense delight in music originated the most extravagant fables respecting the charms of their skilful musicians. According to their fictitious imaginations Orpheus received a lyre from Apollo or Mercury, on which he played with so masterly a hand, that the most rapid rivers ceased to flow, the savage beasts of the forest forgot their wildness, and the mountain moved to listen to his song. All nature seemed charmed and animated, and the nymphs were his constant companions. Amphion is said to have built the walls of Thebes by the sound of his lyre. Modern discoveries and science have taught us how to interpret these fables. About the seventy-ninth year of the Christian era the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were overwhelmed by an erup-

tion of Mount Vesuvius. In the present century, the workmen of the King of Naples, in sinking for wells, discovered the long-buried cities. Excavations have brought to light the numerous utensils, pictures, and books which escaped the destructive influence of the burning lava, and some of those parchment volumes have been unrolled, *fac similes* of them engraved and published. Among them is a Greek treatise on music, by Philodemus; and here we have the *truth* represented which lay hidden under the *fables* of Orpheus and Amphion. The latter was a skilful harper who was frequently employed by the Theban workmen to play to them while they were engaged in their labour, and for which they rewarded him out of the proceeds of that labour. So powerful and pleasing was his music, that they went lightly and comfortably through their toils. Time and labour went on without *tedium* or *fatigue*; and the walls and towers were speedily raised. This, by a metaphor, was attributed to the dulcet sounds of the harp. Poetry seized on and embellished the idea, and mythology incorporated it with her fabulous system. The story of Orpheus is of the same class. In figurative language, by his charming music he drew stones and trees after him. Literally, he stimulated the workmen to diligence and activity, and alleviated their toil. To these *mythological fables* and *historic facts* a beautiful allusion is made by Mr. Charles Wesley, when praying for his own success as a Christian minister who uses all his skill as a *poet* and musician for the glory of God:

“Thy own musician, Lord, inspire,
And may my consecrated lyre
Repeat the Psalmist’s part!
His Son and Thine reveal in me,
And fill with sacred melody
The fibres of my heart.

So shall I charm the listening throng,
And draw the living stones along
By Jesu's tuneful name.
The living stones shall dance, shall rise,
And form a city in the skies,
The new Jerusalem."*

Nor did this sweet singer of the Christian Israel preach, and pray, and sing in vain.

The great revival of religion which took place in connection with the ministry of John and Charles Wesley, was undoubtedly attributable, in no small degree, to the influence which their hymns exerted on the minds of the masses, who flocked to hear the wonderful men proclaim the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

That noble volume, the Wesleyan Hymn Book, richly fraught with Christian doctrine, expressed in harmonious, bold metaphorical language, awakened the attention, modified the hostility of the wicked to the gospel message, and prepared thousands to listen with earnestness to the joyful tidings of salvation. We believe it is Isaac Taylor who says of Wesley, "It was by his sacred lyre more than as a preacher, that he tamed the rudeness of untaught minds, and gained a listening ear for the harmonies of heaven. The Hymn Book to such bodies, comes in the stead of creeds, articles, canons and presiding powers." We heartily rejoice in the change.

To the poetry and song of the Primitive Methodists, though neither of them have been of the highest order, the great success which has crowned their labours is vastly indebted. "Many of their favourite hymns, were they rigidly tested by the acknowledged rules of sacred poetry,

* Lempriere's Class. Dict. Orpheus and Amphion; and Dr. A. Clarke's Com. on 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12.

would be found below the standard. Nor have the tunes in which those hymns have been sung, been invariably chosen with good taste, or sung with scientific accuracy. But what do the majority of mankind either know or care about literary precision? The melody, the drapery, and the general tones of music are infinitely more to them than literary perfection. In processioning the streets and lanes of cities, towns, and villages, it has been often found that stirring hymns and lively tunes, although void of learned merit have nevertheless been followed by immediate and grand effects. Crowds of careless and neglected poor have rushed out of obscure courts and alleys—drunkards and tipplers have bolted out of stews and dramshops—thieves, robbers, and poachers, have darted from their secluded dens—the sediment of female society, with their vicious paramours, have been drawn out of their lurking places—thousands have listened to the songs of Zion and the gospel invitation for the first time with evident amazement and delight; and not a few of them have swelled the moving train, and marched in an orderly manner to the main field of religious operation.” Conviction for sin, penitential sorrow, saving faith in Christ, and joy in the Holy Ghost, have successively followed. And thus multitudes have been plucked as brands out of the fire.*

Hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, a species of literature in which the English language is said to be richer than any other, “administer solid comfort, healthy excitement, and sound instruction, to an extent and in a degree, which never can be calculated. The robust in body and mind, the frivolous, and the sordid, know nothing of that solace and renovation of the heart, which sacred poetry is every day conveying to the spirits of tens of

* See my Jubilee of English Camp-meetings, chapter viii.

thousands around them. It is not merely when sickness has slackened the cords of life, but also when the heart has become benumbed by the cares and toils of a common day, and when even the understanding is rendered obtuse,—it is then that the hymn and psalm restore the spirit and impart renewed clearness, by giving consistency to the distracted intellect, and so lead the soul back to its place of rest in the presence of things unseen and eternal.” But not only the unlearned and rude—the educated and refined also, are powerfully moved and swayed by the eloquence of sacred song.

4. The music of the sanctuary should not be complex and elaborate. The notes of a tune, as well as the sentiments of a discourse, should be placed within the comprehension of ordinary minds. In singing, as well as in preaching, while we address the passions of men we ought to speak to their understandings. “The criterion of a good tune,” says Andrew Fuller, “is not its pleasing and scientific ear, but its being quickly caught by the congregation. It is, I think, by singing, as it is by preaching. A fine judge of composition will admire a sermon, which makes no manner of impression upon the public mind, and therefore cannot be a good one. That is the best sermon which is adapted to produce the best effects; and the same thing may be said of a tune. If it correspond with the feelings of a pious heart, and aid him in realizing the sentiments of the poet, it will be quickly learned and sung with delight. Where this effect is not produced, I would throw away my performance, and try again.”

Critical music, the knowledge of which is difficult to acquire, is an injurious innovation on primitive simplicity. In the earliest and best periods of the church sacred music and the songs of Zion were the peculiar literature of good

men, and the praises of God were sung experimentally in simple and joyous strains. According to Martini, "the music of the first five or six ages of the Christian Church consisted chiefly in a plain, simple chant, of unisons and octaves. The artificial and complex mode of singing which afterwards crept into the Church was one thing among many which gave offence to the spirit of piety at the Reformation. The leading Reformers exerted themselves to remove this abuse. Both Luther and Calvin were mindful to exclude the elaborate music of the papists, and to substitute tunes more simple, like those which were used in the early ages of the Church. Luther's "Old Hundredth" psalm tune is a delightful specimen of simple melody. When that is sung, the whole congregation join in the service, and the effect produced is generally good." Knotty, artistic music in congregational worship has been a source of grief to some of the brightest ornaments and the firmest pillars of the Church in modern times. In Mr. Wesley's Journal, April 8, 1781, we find him complaining loudly of this insidious evil: "I came," says Mr. Wesley, "just in time to Warrington, to put a stop to a bad custom which was creeping in here. A few men who had fine voices, sang a psalm which no one knew, in a tune fit for an opera, wherein three, four, or five, sang different words at the same tune! What an insult upon common sense! What a burlesque upon public worship! No custom can excuse such a mixture of profaneness and absurdity!" With regret we add that the profaneness and absurdity of which Wesley complained, outlived him, and is extensively prevalent among the various churches which bear the Methodist name.

It may be objected "that the progress of education and the march of intellect have so improved the popular taste,

that there is now a demand for a more elevated standard of scientific music in the Church; and that were Wesley present with us he would not think and speak on Church music as he did fourscore years ago." To all such like objections we attach little importance. And it is certain that many great and good men still deplore the abuse of music in public worship. Among the various causes which combine to produce this fascinating mischief, the institution of choirs is not the least. According to Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, choral singing was introduced into the Church at Antioch, in the fourth century. The sequel has proved the innovation to be a perilous one. We do not mean that choirs are necessarily and invariably injurious. But through the wiles of the devil, and the native propensities of the human heart, their general tendency is to evil. We believe with Mr. Ford, that "*a choir which is well trained and regulated, is a great blessing to any place of worship: but that if it be badly managed, or composed of improper materials, it is one of the greatest plagues with which a congregation can be burdened.*" Among the evils which are but too frequently connected with choral singing, we notice

1. Tunes are commonly selected which the congregation does not know, and consequently, in the singing of which it cannot heartily unite. "In those congregations," says a public journalist, "where the choirs only perform the duty of praising God, the tunes are frequently new and strange, and however well performed, are about as edifying as an oration in Greek would be to an unlearned auditory."

"Soon after the Reformation commenced in England," says Martini, "complaints were made by many of the clergy and others, of the intricacy and difficulty of the

church music of those times, and several reforms were the consequence. The thirty-two commissioners to whom Edward VI. committed the compilation of a body of ecclesiastical laws, condemned figurative and operose music, or that kind of singing which abounds with fugues and responsive passages, and a commixture of intricate proportions." We wish the royal commissioners and complainants had succeeded in putting down this kind of sacred music at once and for ever. But gigantic evils, and those especially which are patronised by science, are not readily annihilated. The musical abuses which annoyed the reformers still exist, and are deeply deplored by the most intelligent and spiritual members of the Christian church.

2. Sound is preferred to sense and talent to piety. Everything is sacrificed to a good voice and musical skill. The question is not, is the candidate for the orchestra or singer's pew thoroughly religious? Can he sing with the spirit, as well as with the understanding? Can he make melody in his heart to the Lord, like David, Jeduthun, and Paul? But, has he a good voice? Is he tunable? Does he understand music? If so he is cordially invited to assist in leading the musical devotion of the sanctuary. Can such conduct be reconciled with the New Testament? Genuine, intelligent Christians only are competent to judge. A good singer among the people of God, who has not the life of God in his soul, is what Heliogabalus said of the nightingales' brains on which he desired to sup—"Nothing but a sound." But many people are more charmed with sound than with sense. From Kilham's "Transatlantic Sketches" we select the following illustration: "The singing was performed by a professional quartett, with florid accompaniments on the organ. One

of the hymns he gave out was that which commences,

“Awake our souls; away our fears.”

This did not appear to suit the taste of the *prima donna*, and she led to other words of her own choice. What the words were nobody seemed either to know or to care: for did she not sing divinely! It is a mournful reflection, that in sacred choirs there are many persons possessing fine voices and musical skill, who remain year after year quite indifferent to religion. A certain minister, while attending an American church in a strange city, was powerfully struck with the surpassing sweetness of the voice of a young lady who sat near him. Being afterwards introduced into her company, he inquired whether she loved the Saviour. She replied, “I am afraid not.” “Then, my dear young friend,” said the minister, “what will you do with that fine voice in eternity? Shall it be spent in uttering the wailings of the lost for ever?” The solemn questions sent conviction to her heart, and she never rested till she found peace through believing in Jesus. Happy would it be if all the gifted singers of the Lord’s songs would adopt the same course.

3. The singing department of public worship is usually consigned too much, if not exclusively, to the choir. The professional singers are not satisfied with *leading* the service of song, but they wish to have it entirely to themselves. They neither expect nor desire the assistance of the congregation. On the other hand, the assembly feel restrained by a fear of intrusion, or perhaps they regard the musical division of the service as an *entertainment*, and therefore voluntarily keep silent and *listen* to the appointed, and it may be *hired*, performers. Thus the praises of God are sung by proxy. Lukewarmness and corruption inevitably follow. In a periodical which is

now in course of circulation, a gentleman says, "Yesterday morning I was at the Methodist church here (United States). A very pleasant room it is, and I am told that a very worthy society occupies it. But I have a most weighty charge to bring against the good people, of musical apostasy. I had expected a treat of good hearty singing. There were Charles Wesley's hymns, and there were the good old Methodist tunes, that ancient piety loved and modern conceit laughs at. Imagine my chagrin when, after reading the hymn, up rose a choir from the shelf at the other end of the church, and began to sing a monotonous tune of the modern music-book style. The patient congregation stood meekly to be sung to, as men stand under the rain when there is no shelter. Scarcely a lip moved. No one seemed to hear the hymn, or to care for the music. How I longed for the good old Methodist THUNDER! One good burst of old-fashioned music would have blown this modern singing out of the windows, like wadding from a gun! Men may call this an improvement and genteel! Gentility has really killed *our* churches, and it will kill Methodist churches, if they give way to its false and pernicious ambition. We know very well what good old-fashioned Methodist music was. It had faults enough, doubtless, against taste. But it had an inward purpose and a religious earnestness which enabled it to carry all its faults, and to triumph in spite of them."

The *Northern Christian Advocate* for Sept. 16, 1857, quoting from the *New York Independent*, says, "It was worship. Yesterday's music was *tolerable singing*, but *very poor worship*. We are sorry that just as our Churches are beginning to imitate the former example of Methodist Churches, and to introduce melodies that the people love, and to encourage universal singing in the congregation,

our Methodist brethren should pick up our cast-off formalism in Church music. It will be worse with them than with us. It will mark a greater length of decline. We could hardly believe our eyes and ears yesterday. We could not persuade ourselves that we stood before a Methodist Church. We should have supposed it to be a good, solid Presbyterian or Congregational Church, in which the choir and pulpit perform everything, and the people nothing." How far these remarks apply to certain Primitive Methodist congregations, let those who are best acquainted with them judge. We will add one more short extract from the Wesleyan:—"On one occasion we went to a certain church, where, after a very pathetic sermon to penitents, the minister gave out that good old hymn:—

"Come, ye sinners, poor and needy," &c.

The minister had prayed that *we* (the congregation) might sing the praises of God acceptably. But how was this done? Why, four accomplished and well-trained singers did the whole of it. One female sang the air, or melody; another sang the alto, or second treble; one gentleman sang the tenor, and another the bass. This is called *quartett* singing. A *fifth* voice would have spoiled the whole, and if one of the *performers* had been absent, we must have been content with a *trio*." We recollect one instance, and happily but one, when a couple of young persons were set up in front of the gallery in a Primitive Methodist chapel, on an anniversary occasion, to sing a *duet*. A distinguished Congregational minister preached the sermon. At the conclusion of the service he tapped the superintendent preacher on the shoulder, and said significantly, "*This is not the way you sing in your revivals!*"

4. Choirs are frequently a source of trouble both to themselves and to Churches. Music itself is calculated to exert a soothing influence on the human soul, even when its passions are disturbed. A remarkable instance of this kind occurs in the history of Saul. When the evil spirit troubled him, the harp of David calmed the agitation of his mind. Precisely what was the nature of Saul's malady, and how the musical instrument of David acted on his disordered mind, we cannot say positively; but its potent effect in relieving the suffering monarch is an incontrovertible fact. Perhaps the nervous system of Saul had been brought by some means into a diseased state, and by the gentle and agreeable vibrations of the harp, skillfully swept by the hand of David, it was restored to a healthy and vigorous tone. So great is the power of music over the animate creation, that it has been said, and said truly—

“Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast.”

How then comes it to pass that dissensions are so frequent among musicians, and between singers and Churches? Did we not know by painful experience to the contrary, one would have thought that the school of sacred music would never degenerate into an arena of angry strife, or create a moment's annoyance to the people of God. But daily occurrences prove that if expectations so pleasing are cherished, they are doomed to perish: “Though I never had a quarrel,” says Dr. A. Clarke, “with the singers in any place, yet I have never known one case where there was a choir of singers, that they did not make disturbances in the societies.” “Singing,” says Dr. Campbell, “like everything else, may prove an inlet to evil in the Churches of Christ. This celestial exercise has been the occasion of more mischief than anything else that

can be named. The tendency to exhibition, to vain display, is so great, it is most difficult to restrain it. Choirs are almost always nuisances. They seldom rest till they get the matter wholly into their own hands, when they will endeavour to ride roughshod over the Church and pastor, making sanctity give place to science, and singing to the congregation rather than to God." The principal cause of these unholy conflicts is, admitting irreligious persons into the choir. This is generally done, possibly in sincerity—but always from a short-sighted regard to a fine voice or musical skill. This is like transplanting beautiful weeds from uncultivated land into a corn-field, for the sake of show! The appearance is more gay and lively, but the crop is damaged. Talent reigns and triumphs in the temple of God: piety is trodden under foot. Entertainment is substituted for worship. The proper object of devotion is forgotten, the skilful performer proudly receives the honours which belong to his Creator. How can it be otherwise? It would be unreasonable to suppose that ungodly choristers will "sing to the praise and glory of God." From a powerful internal impulse they will sing to the praise and glory of themselves. Hence they are in imminent danger of being drawn into a state of unholy rivalry. They become irritable, highly sensitive, slavishly attached to precision and accuracy in their favourite science, impatient of contradiction, easily offended; and when once they are offended, they are harder to be won than a strong city. The seeds of discord once sown vegetate luxuriantly. By way of revenge, musical instruments are slipped into the green bag, fine voices wrapped up in napkins, or buried in the earth, and the praises of God are unsung, or left to be celebrated by unscientific persons.

But if unconverted choirs remain agreed among themselves, in what light ought we to regard their services, with respect to the congregation? As they are not earnestly concerned for their own salvation, it were preposterous to suppose that they are concerned properly for the salvation of others. Whether they perform vocal or instrumental music, their object is not to lead the people to God, and to assist them in the delightful exercise of praise; but to tickle their ears, to gratify their taste for melodious sounds, and thereby to excite their admiration. To a certain extent they have their reward. The less serious part of the assembly are delighted with their talented efforts, while the more pious are ashamed and grieved. But if a complaint be uttered, however well founded, it is received with an ill grace, construed into an insult, and sharply resented.

It commonly occurs that improprieties are discovered which cannot be decently tolerated. The most sensible and consistent part of the assembly is shocked at the levity and irreverence which transpires in the singers' pew or the orchestra during public worship. Reformation is demanded. On the other hand interference is condemned, as officious and dangerous. The church becomes divided. The choristers, supported by their admirers, imagine themselves indispensable to the prosperity of the church. This makes them untractable, perhaps obstinate, and offensively disrespectful towards opponents. Disgust, complaints, and recriminations rapidly follow. The temple of peace becomes a theatre of contention; and the church, instead of sailing prosperously before a fair wind, is driven to and fro, and tossed by violently conflicting elements. Having briefly glanced at the disease, what can we propose as a remedy?

1. Let the music of the sanctuary be regarded, theoretically, as devotion, not as diversion or amusement. Were it merely agreeable pastime, there would be nothing incongruous in employing worldly persons as the chief actors, only in this supposed case, the amusement should not be enjoyed in the house of God, especially on the Lord's day. For thus saith the Lord, "ye shall reverence my sanctuary, and remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But to indulge in amusements on the Sabbath is not keeping it holy. To provide amusement in the house of God, is mocking Him to His face.

2. Let the music of the church be performed, not as an entertainment, but as a religious service. With a view to the carrying out of this object, invite no persons to assist in leading the singing or musical department of public worship, except such as can sing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord. The church that employs ungodly persons to lead the singing service, in this respect, if in no other, is an apostate church. If ever she enjoys the honour of a pure evangelical community, "Ichabod" may be written on the front of the orchestra, for "the glory is departed." She has lost her first love. Impenitent sinners cannot, if they would, in their present state, sing the praises of God as they ought to be sung. Listen to the spiritual and lofty sentiments of the sweet singer of Israel: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock which hath horns and hoofs." Kindred sentiments are beautifully expressed by one of the most gifted singers of Christendom:—

"Rehearse His praise with awe profound,
Let knowledge lead the song:
Nor mock Him with a solemn sound
Upon a thoughtless tongue."—WATTS.

Above and beyond all, hear what God says: "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord." Eph. v. 18, 19. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col. iii. 16. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." Amos. vi. 1, 5, 6.

In the preface to the Primitive Methodist Hymn Book, compiled by Mr. Hugh Bourne, speaking of singers who are truly pious, he says, "These are appointed of the Lord. All others would bring a vain oblation, and would injure both themselves and the congregation. None should be suffered to take any part in leading the singing service, but such as can sing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord." Who then is on the Lord's side? Who will stand up for the purity of Church music? Let no Christian bow the knee to the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Amidst the prostrate crowd of idolaters, dare to stand erect. Compromise no principle. Vindicate the claims of the gospel to the last. A salutary reformation will follow.

3. Church music ought to be congregational. Praise to God, either mental or vocal, for His infinite goodness, is obligatory on every individual. But our religious duties cannot be performed efficiently by proxy. If God has bestowed the talent, we ought to sing for ourselves, as well as pray for ourselves. For the evil which we deplore,

Dr. Campbell says, "Mr. Waite's plan of instructing the *entire people* is the only certain remedy that can be devised." To obviate the evil many Churches have selected a few youthful members of the congregation, and trained and set them apart for the special service of praise. But in this scheme there is not only temptation and a snare, but also something unseemly. Although out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise, the solemn and important nature of the service under consideration suggests that it should not be consigned *chiefly* to juvenile and inexperienced minds. A comely boy, gifted with a fine voice, and arrayed in a white surplice, may be able to draw attention and win applause; but if he be destitute of youthful piety, it is a temptation to himself, and an insult to a congregation, to set him up as a chorister in the temple of God. Let persons of tried and proved piety lead, and the assembly habitually trained to accompany their leaders. By the adoption of this plan, Churches in some instances might sustain a loss in musical talent; but what they would lose in point of science they would more than gain in consistency and spiritual power. "A revival of true religion," says Dr. Campbell, "will always bring with it a revival of praise: it may be defective in science, but it will possess that, *one grain* of which is worth all the science in the world—devotion, faith, hope, charity, the gushing freshness of spiritual life." In this delightful branch of divine worship, let every Christian do his duty, then will the dwellings of Jacob, and the gates of Zion, send forth peals of acceptable praise to heaven's eternal King.

4. Let Christians who are gifted with a musical voice, cultivate and employ their talent for the glory of God in the service of the sanctuary. Every endowment which we possess,

whether of body or of mind, ought to be used for the honour of our Divine Master. "Ye are not your own, but ye are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his." Many pious persons who are well qualified to assist in the service of song, keep silent through diffidence. They are afraid of attracting that notice which, to their constitutional retirement, is disagreeable. But when our natural dispositions are opposed to our duty, they should be overcome. Talents should neither be abused nor buried; but cheerfully employed for the glory of Him by whom they were bestowed. Others would willingly contribute to the vocal music of the sanctuary; but they fear that by so doing they would impair their health. Loud and excessive singing, no doubt, imposes on the vocal powers a strain which is injuriously severe.

But as a rule singing is calculated to promote both physical and mental energy. In some instances predispositions to pulmonic complaints are corrected by this delightful employment. Dr. Rush, a celebrated American physician, recommends singing, not only as an accomplishment, but also as friendly to health and happiness. "Vocal music," says this distinguished writer, "should never be neglected in the education of a young lady. Besides preparing her to join in that part of public worship which consists in psalmody, it will enable her to soothe the cares of domestic life; and the sorrows that will sometimes intrude into her own bosom may all be relieved by a song, when sound and sentiment unite to act upon the mind. I here introduce a fact which has been suggested to me by my profession, and that is, that the exercise of the organs of the breast, by singing, contributes very much to defend them from those diseases to which the climate and other

causes expose them. The Germans are seldom afflicted with consumptions, nor have I ever known but one instance of spitting blood among them. This, I believe, is in part occasioned by the strength which their lungs acquired by exercising them in vocal music ; for this constitutes an essential branch of their education. The music master of our academy has furnished me with an observation still more in favour of this opinion. He informed me that he had known several instances of persons who were strongly disposed to consumption restored to health by the exercise of their lungs in singing. The best foreign singers have been remarkable for longevity, many reaching the age of ninety years and upwards." And, indeed, if our muscular system and bodily senses may all be strengthened by proper exercise, we see no reason why our musical organs may not be invigorated by the same means. The endowments of God, whether intellectual or physical, are designed for action and improvement. The influence of the respiratory organs on the action of the heart was strikingly illustrated in the case of a lady, whose heart sometimes acted so irregularly that she was apt to fall into a state of syncope. She accidentally discovered, that by the act of singing she could prevent herself from fainting. "I will write you," she observed, "something very remarkable about myself, namely, that when my heart is in a great flutter, and I am not certain whether I shall not faint away, singing removes it almost directly. One Sunday in church I expected every moment I should be obliged to be taken out and disturb the congregation, when happily the psalms were beginning to be sung, and I instantly joined in the psalm ; the comfort the act of singing then gave me was almost instantaneous."—*Wardrop on the Heart.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOVEFEASTS.

1. The origin of lovefeasts. They were held in apostolic times, and are referred to in the New Testament.
2. The nature of lovefeasts.
3. When they were celebrated.
4. Beneficial tendency of the Primitive lovefeasts.
5. Their early degeneracy.
6. The restrictions to which they were subjected on account of their abuse.
7. Their restoration.
8. They should be open to Church members only, special cases excepted.
9. Objections to lovefeasts. Bitter things written against Primitive Methodist Lovefeasts by *John Gibson, B.D., Vicar of Brent with Furneux Pelham.*
10. Statements of experience at lovefeasts, to be edifying, should be short and pointed.

"These are spots in your (agapais) lovefeasts, when they feast with you; feeding themselves without fear." Jude, 12.

For the sake of convenience, we will reduce what we have to advance on love-feasts to a few particulars:—

1. *The origin of love-feasts.*—To this institution we meet with several references in the New Testament. It therefore commenced in the apostolic age. What circumstances led to the establishment of this festival we are not informed. It is thought by some eminent Christian scholars that it is almost certain love-feasts were instituted in memory of the last supper of Jesus Christ with His disciples, which supper was concluded before He instituted the Eucharist. Ryland, the translator of "*Neander's Church History*," says, "Much learned research has been spent in tracing the origin of this custom; but though considerable obscurity may rest on the details, the general historical connection is tolerably obvious. It is true that the *eranoi* and *etairiai*, and other similar institutions of Greece and Rome, presented some points of resemblance

which facilitated both the adoption and the abuse of the *agapæ* (love-feast) by the Gentile converts of Christianity; but we cannot consider them as direct models of the latter. If we reflect upon the profound impression which the transactions of the night on which the Lord was betrayed must have made on the minds of the apostles, nothing can be conceived more natural, or in closer accordance with the genius of the new dispensation, than a wish to perpetuate the commemoration of His death in connection with their social meal. The primary celebration of the Eucharist had impressed a sacredness on the precious repast; and when to this consideration we add the ardent faith and love of the new converts on the one hand, and the loss of property with the disruption of old connections and attachments on the other, which must have heightened the feeling of brotherhood, we need not look further to account for the institution of the *agapæ*,—at once a symbol of Christian love, and a striking exemplification of its benevolent energy." In the opinion of Calmet, the love-feasts of the primitive Christians were probably instituted in imitation of a kindred usage which obtained among the Jews. "The Jews," says this eminent biblical scholar, "had certain devotional entertainments, in some degree related to the *agapæ*. On their great festival days they made feasts for families, for the priests, the poor, and orphans; or sent portions to them. There were also certain sacrifices and first-fruits appointed by the law to be set apart for that purpose." We now leave the reader to form his own opinion on the circumstances which originated the primitive *agapæ*, or feasts of love.

2. *Their character.* The name which the apostles gave to this Christian institution is indicative of its cha-

racter. *Agape* or *agapai* in the Epistle of Jude, v. 12, is translated "feasts of charity." But as the term charity is usually employed in our language to denote relief to the poor and needy, liberality in gifts, or services to promote objects of utility, or candour [in judging of men's actions, it is not the most appropriate word to express the meaning of the Greek term under consideration. According to Parkhurst the radical import of the word is *love*; he therefore renders the word *agapai*, "love-feasts, feasts of charity." "They were furnished," he adds, "by the common oblations of the faithful. Rich and poor were allowed to partake of them with decency and sobriety." Commenting on Jude, v. 12, Dr. A. Clarke says, "Among the ancients, the richer members of the Church made an occasional general feast, at which all the members attended, and the poor and the rich ate together. The fatherless, the widows, and the strangers were invited to these feasts; and their eating together was a proof of their love to each other; whence such entertainments were called love-feasts." Pliny, in his celebrated ninety-seventh epistle to the Emperor Trajan, written in 107 A.D., says, concerning the meetings of the Christians of Bithynia, the seat of his jurisdiction, "Their practice is to meet before day and sing a hymn to Christ, as to God, and to bind themselves by a solemn oath, or sacrament, to do no wickedness: these things performed, they separate, and meet again to partake of a common and innocent meal." The innocent meal to which the illustrious Roman refers, is understood to signify the primitive love-feast. *Agapæ*, or the feast of love, is thus described by Jones:—"It was a festival practised among the first Christians, with a view of cultivating mutual affection and friendly intercourse among each other. It was early introduced into the

Church, and, as some think, is referred to in Acts xi. 46 ; Jude, verse 12 ; 2 Peter xi. 13. It consisted of an entertainment prepared by the richer members, to which all were invited, and was commonly held in the place of worship, when the worship of the Lord's-day was over. There they testified their love by mutual acts of kindness, by partaking of the same fare, and by liberally supplying the necessities of their indigent brethren."

But the most particular account which has come down to us of the Agapai is furnished by Tertullian in his Apology for the Christians, chap. 39. "We Christians," says this ancient father, "look upon ourselves as one body, actuated, as it were, by one soul ; and being thus incorporated by love, we can never dispute what we are to bestow upon our own members. And is it any great wonder that such charitable brethren as enjoy all things in common, should have such frequent love-feasts ? The nature of this supper you may understand by its name, for it is the Greek word for love. We Christians think we can never be too expensive, because we consider all to be gain that is laid out in doing good. When, therefore, we are at the charge of an entertainment, it is to refresh the bowels of the needy. We feed the hungry, because we know God takes a peculiar delight in seeing us do it. If, therefore, we feast only with such excellent and noble designs, I leave you from them to guess at the rest of our discipline in matters of pure religion. Nothing earthly, nothing impure, has any admittance here. Our souls ascend in prayer to God before we sit down to meat. We eat only what suffices nature, and drink no more than is strictly becoming chaste and regular persons. We sup like servants who know that we may awake in the night to the service of our Master ! and we discourse as those

who recollect that God hears them. When supper is ended, every one is invited forth to sing praises to God, and by this you may judge of the measure of drinking at a Christian feast. As we begin, so we conclude all, with prayer, and depart with the same degree of temperance and modesty with which we came; as men who have not so properly been drinking, as imbibing religion." From the testimony of Tertullian, it appears that the primitive love-feast was a temperate meal—"a supper of love—a solace of poverty—a moderator of wealth—and a discipline of humility."

3. *When they were anciently celebrated.* At first they were celebrated *before* the Lord's Supper. In course of time they were observed *after* the Lord's Supper; but they were never confounded, nor was the former social repast ever substituted for the table of the Lord.

4. *The beneficial tendency of the primitive love-feasts.* Among the early disciples of Christ the Agapai were not only powerful means of cultivating mutual affection throughout their community, and gaining the good will of those who observed their conduct; but in all probability they contributed to promote the Christian cause, by leading to profitable conversation, and by instructing and supporting the minds of young converts under the difficulties and dangers which attended their respective situations in life. Had the ancient love-feasts been merely social repasts, founded on the reciprocal affection of the assembled guests, they would not have failed to commend themselves to the benevolence of the human heart; but as they were associated with devotional exercises, they bore a religious impress. The festival was a holy convocation. When the idolatrous Israelites had made the golden calf they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose up to play. Not so

with the primitive Christians when they celebrated their feasts of love. As children of one spiritual family they sat down at a common table, and took a temperate refreshment, whether or not they had contributed anything towards the joyous and fraternal meal. After supper water was brought for the hands, and fresh lights. Every one was invited to sing, and to glorify God, by passages from the Sacred Scriptures, or of his own composition. This discovered whether proper moderation had been observed at the table. In short, the repast commenced and concluded with prayer, as above stated. For the correctness of these statements we have the testimony of Tertullian, who flourished in the second century. While the love-feasts were conducted on these principles they could not fail to be highly useful, both to the bodies and souls of the faithful: and especially so as the parochial system of relieving the poor, which obtains among us, was unknown to them.

5. *Their early degeneracy.* Whatever excellences attached to the primitive lovefeasts, the glory soon departed, and the fine gold became dim. From 1 Cor. xi. 17, &c., and Jude 12, it is evident that at a very early period the Agapai were perverted from their original design. "The rich," says Ryland, "frequently practised a self-indulgence, to the neglect of their poorer brethren. They feasted on the provisions they brought, without waiting for the poorer members, or granting them a portion of their abundance." Without vigilance and prayer, the purest and most benevolent institutions soon lose their primitive holiness and utility. Selfish men creep into the church for the sake of loaves and fishes. Good men lose their first love, and imbibe antichristian principles; pious customs degenerate and become an occasion of scandal to the church of God.

Jamieson, in his "Manners and Trials of the Primitive Christians," in reference to the feasts of love among the early followers of Christ, says, "This interesting custom in the hands of Christians, who did not carry to its observance the pure and exalted feelings that influenced their ancestors, soon degenerated from its primitive character, and became the occasion of many excesses; so that, from being first prohibited to be held in churches, it was afterwards found expedient to observe it only on rare occasions, till at length it fell totally into disuse, and is now associated almost exclusively with the memory of the early age that gave it birth." But not entirely so. They are still celebrated very frequently by the different branches of the great Methodist family, in every quarter of the globe. Nor are we aware that in any place they are polluted by those "excesses" which led to their suppression in state churches. Of one thing we are certain, by the Primitive Methodist Societies lovefeasts are celebrated on strictly temperate principles, and in a devotional manner. The selfish and indecent manner in which the Corinthian Christians celebrated this festival, well deserved the sharp rebuke which was administered to them by St. Paul. "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it When ye come together in one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

We need not be surprised that St. Jude designates such professors of religion, "spots in your feasts of charity."

6. *The restrictions to which lovefeasts were subjected on account of their abuse.* By the early rulers of the church, various laws were enacted affecting lovefeasts. In the Council of Gangra, in Paphlagonia, which was held about A.D. 360, in the true spirit of popery, a curse was denounced on whomsoever despised the partakers of the Agapai, or refused to join in them. By Canon XXVIII. of the Council of Laodicea, in the middle of the fourth century, it was forbidden to hold them in churches. At the Council of Carthage, A.D. 397, it was decreed by Canon XXIX., that none should partake of the Lord's Supper unless they had previously abstained from food. This prohibition was repeated in the sixth, seventh, and ninth centuries, at the Council of Orleans, Canon XII., A.D. 692, and in the Council held at Aix-la-Chapelle, A.D. 816. But these regulations were not intended to suppress lovefeasts altogether. When Pope Gregory the Great sent Austin in A.D. 596, to preach the gospel to the Anglo-Saxons, he advised the celebration of the Agapai in booths formed of the branches of trees, at the consecration of churches. This whim was probably suggested by the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated in booths constructed with branches of trees, in commemoration of their ancestors' sojourning in moveable tents, during their forty year's peregrinations in the Arabian wilderness. As might have been foreseen, shifting the scene of the ancient lovefeasts from the churches to places less sacred, did not purge them from their corruptions. They were still abused and ultimately fell into disuse. The rulers of the church were either unable to grapple successfully with the difficulty, or neglected to make a proper use of their influence.

7. *Their restoration.* In modern times lovefeasts have been revived among the Methodists and Moravians, in the purity and simplicity of the original institution. And in one point, at least, they are safer to the parties present on the festive occasion, than was the primitive model. If there is not such a development of liberality by the wealthier members of the church towards their poor brethren, as was exhibited at the ancient Agapai, there is less temptation to indulge in "excess." No meal is provided. No table is spread. A little bread and water, insufficient for an ordinary refreshment, is handed to each person. Hence no opportunity is afforded for anyone to exceed the bounds of the strictest temperance. The spiritual exercises associated therewith, are singing, prayer, and the relation of religious experience.

8. *With discreet exceptions, they should be open to Church members only.* The name and character of the institution suggest the propriety of not throwing them open indiscriminately to the public. Christians love all men as fellow creatures, and heartily desire and pray for their salvation; but they do not and cannot love unbelievers as brethren of the household of faith. But lovefeasts are designed to express a certain visible form of mutual love, which the followers of Christ feel for each other. And we do not see it necessary or advisable to invite careless and impenitent sinners, except on special occasions, to come and witness our symbolic expressions of reciprocal affection, as professed children of the family of God. Besides, the presence of ungodly persons operates as a check on the minds of sincere and humble Christians, and frequently hinders them from edifying their brethren by their rich and happy experience. A thousand things may be properly discussed in the domestic circle, which are prudently waived if neigh-

bours intrude. The thoughtful reader will perceive what bearing this remark has on the religious service under consideration.

9. *Objections to lovefeasts.* As the ancient heathen were grossly ignorant of the true genius of Christianity it is not a subject of wonder, if they put the most unfavourable and groundless interpretations on the manners and customs of Christians. "From Pliny's letter (before referred to) it appears that lovefeasts were suspected by the Roman authorities of belonging to the class of *unions or secret societies*, which were often employed for political purposes, and as such denounced by the imperial edicts."

In modern times, to Primitive Methodist lovefeasts opposition of another kind and from another quarter has been offered. In a pamphlet written by "John Gibson, Vicar of Brent, with Furneux Pelham, Herts.," some bitter things are said against the Primitive Methodists and their "modes of worship;" and so valuable has Mr. Gibson's pamphlet been regarded by the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, that it bears the impress of its publications, and is circulated under its auspices. In a truly sectarian tone Mr. Gibson asks, "is there not something most repugnant to true Christian feeling, in a person's coming forward to lay bare the secrets of his heart in these lovefeasts? What, when a man has been bowed to the dust in sorrow and shame for sin before the Lord, is he then to go forth and tell his fellow-creatures what a great penitent he is? Or, when Divine grace has filled his soul with humble gratitude and love to God, is he straightway to cry aloud to a room full of people, 'See how great is my gratitude, and how glowing is my love?' Do not all such practices look very like those Pharisaic exhibitions, which our Lord so strongly condemns in the opening of the sixth

chapter of Matthew?" We answer unhesitatingly, they do. But although we have attended hundreds of lovefeasts among the Primitive Methodists, we never witnessed the follies and presumptions which Mr. Gibson imputes to them. How many Primitive Methodist lovefeasts Mr. G. and the gentlemen who compose the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge have attended, and what they have heard at such meetings, is best known to themselves. If their imputations are false, they are "like one that beateth the air." They fight with a phantom of their own imagination. And if their accusations be founded on truth, they should have been slow to censure; for they are fairly open to the retort, "Physicians, heal yourselves"—"How beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" If these gentlemen want employment, as reformers, they may find plenty of work within the pale of their own community. And we respectfully advise them to betake themselves in good earnest to the Herculean task of cleansing their own stable. We neither say nor think that Primitive Methodist lovefeasts reach the standard of perfection; but we should be ashamed to teach and tolerate many things which are taught and sanctioned in the Church, *as by law established*.*

10. *Statements of experience at lovefeasts, to be edifying, should be short and pointed.* In the biography and journals of good men, we expect something like a historical narrative of their religious career; and in the friendly conversations of Christians with each other they may sometimes profitably give detailed accounts of the gracious

* See my Dialogues in Defence of Primitive Methodism, between Mr. Gibson, the Vicar of Brent, with Furneux Pelham and Martin Bull.

dealings of God with them. But in lovefeasts they should allow themselves much less latitude of speech. The usual time allotted for the service does not exceed a couple of hours. A considerable time should be devoted to singing and prayer. Frequently scores, and not unfrequently hundreds of Church members are present, who are qualified to edify the assembly by their experience. For these reasons each person should confine his remarks to a few prominent particulars of general interest. Whatever views the reader may entertain respecting lovefeasts, we doubt not he will admit that the cultivation of reciprocal affection is one of the cardinal duties of a Christian. "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*" 1 Pet. i. 22.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLASS-MEETINGS.

Class-meetings not mentioned or referred to in the Bible. Neither are they forbidden, either explicitly or by implication. Three distinct classes of opponents to Class-meetings. 1. Those who maintain that Christians ought not to relate their religious experience in Class-meetings. But (1.) The Scriptures speak approvingly of religious conferences among the people of God. (2.) The great and good men of the Bible did not make a secret of their religious experience. 2. Those who aver that Class-meetings have a peculiar tendency to expose professors of religion to speak unadvisedly. This statement answered. 3. Those who attribute to Class-meetings imaginary evils. Their groundless conjectures answered. Class-meetings compared with Popish Confessionals. The wide disparity between them stated. Class-meetings under proper discipline are calculated to be highly beneficial. Six arguments in support of this statement. The qualifications which a Class-leader should possess. Conclusion.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
Hebrews x. 25.

CLASS-MEETINGS, by name, are no where mentioned in the Bible; nor are they indicated by any other name in the Sacred Scriptures. Consequently, they are not essential to salvation, nor binding on the consciences of Christians. But as they are neither forbidden in the Bible, nor are contrary to its general teaching, they are allowable, and may even be very useful. By some Churches, including the Primitive Methodist Church, they are so regarded; by other Churches they are disapproved. So far as we are acquainted with facts which bear on the case, the great majority of objectors have but a very imperfect knowledge of the real design and character of this reli-

gious institution, and of its practical operation. Objectors may be divided into three distinct classes. Those who plead that Christians ought not to be encouraged, under any circumstances, to relate their religious experience in class-meetings; those who admit that class-meetings are not in themselves objectionable, but that they have a peculiar tendency to expose professors of religion to speak unadvisedly with their lips, and consequently are inexpedient; and those who attribute to class-meetings imaginary evils, and then combat the phantoms of their own imagination.

1. *Those who plead that Christians ought not, under any circumstances, to relate their religious experience in class-meetings.* In supporting their objection they not unusually confound humble boldness with pharisaical pride. By this fallacious operation of their rational faculty, their judgment is perverted. They are sincere, but misguided. Consequently to their disordered vision the class-meeting presents a scene of self-confidence, boasting, ostentation, and parade, and therefore ought to be suppressed. But what saith the Scriptures?

(1.) They speak approvingly of religious conferences among the people of God. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." (Mal. iii. 16, 17.) Whether this passage of Scripture be of a historical or prophetic character, it appears that frequent religious communion among the faithful is so far from incurring the displeasure of God,

that it is honoured with His special approbation. Consequently, Christians are not bound to "keep their religion to themselves." Read Isaiah, 12th chapter.

(2.) The great and good men of the Bible did not make a secret of their religious experience. Had they been so inclined they might have made a general profession of religion, in common with their countrymen, and refrained from giving any publicity to their religious emotions. But patriarchs, prophets, and apostles proclaim without reserve their hopes and fears, their sorrows and joys. Listen to the experience of Job:—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." (Ch. xix. 25, 26.) Hear what the Psalmist says: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." (Ps. lxvi. 16.) He invites all who have any holy reverence for their Maker, "to attend to his account of the Lord's gracious dealings with him. He proposes to relate to them his religious experience, what he needed, for what he earnestly prayed, and what God has done for him. Thus he intended to teach them by example,—more powerful always than precept, however weighty in itself, and impressively delivered." Harken to the prophet Isaiah: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Ch. li. 10.) Listen to the prophet Habakkuk: "Although the fig-tree shall not

blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Ch. iii. 17, 18.) From these examples it is evident that the inspired penmen of the Old Testament did not consider it morally wrong to give publicity to the gracious dealings of God with them and to their own happy religious experience.

Under the brighter and more spiritual dispensation of the gospel, New Testament saints adopted the same course. Listen to the holy exultation of the blessed Virgin : " And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," &c. Hear the testimony of the great apostle of the Gentiles : " For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. From these passages of Scripture it seems that neither the holy mother of Jesus, nor the inspired apostle Paul, considered it sinful to declare the grace and love of God, as manifested in their own personal experience. If it be pleaded against us that prophets and apostles wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and therefore did not transgress the bounds of propriety, the plea is a weight in our scale ; for the Holy Spirit never inspired any man to speak or write that which was morally wrong. But if good men related or recorded their religious experience under a Divine impulse, and the Bible does not deny a similar privilege to Christians of

any age or nation, we infer that believers may now consistently declare what God hath done for their souls. Another class of objectors are,

2. *Those who admit that class-meetings are not in themselves objectionable, but aver that they have a peculiar tendency to expose professors of religion to speak unadvisedly with their lips.* In *theory*, says the *Christian News*, "they are so excellent as to be beyond all praise. Yet we very much doubt whether in practice they are found to contribute much to the growth of sterling piety. We submit that they tend greatly to a coloured expression of spiritual feeling, and in some instances to positive hypocrisy." Again, "So deceptive is human nature, that little reliance can be placed on any weekly prepared expression of their spiritual position."

Answer. (1). We readily admit that class-meetings are liable to abuse, and that, too frequently, they *are* abused. But what good thing is there among men which is not susceptible of evil? What means of grace is incapable of perversion? Clerks, churchwardens, deacons, precentors, musicians, singers, prayer-leaders, Scripture readers, preachers—may all abuse their offices. But must they therefore be all put down? In attempting the obviation of evils in the worship of God, a wise man will distinguish between those which are inherent and those which are accidental. And if moral evil be associated with the class-meeting, that evil is merely accidental—not a necessary consequence. If the writer in the *Christian News* "doubts" the practical utility of class-meetings, his "doubt" may arise from inexperience. Perhaps he has not fairly tried their practical operation on his own mind. He may have only calculated their results at a distance. But *we* are intimately acquainted with multitudes who

have found class-meetings "to contribute much to the growth of sterling piety."

So far as we are acquainted with the conduct of class-members, it is not at all usual for them "to prepare a weekly expression of their spiritual position." Were their weekly experiences really prepared, as a literary weekly man prepares an article for the press, then indeed but little reliance could be placed on their Christian experience. The intelligent, pious class member conscientiously avoids studied precision on one hand, and spontaneous ebullitions on the other. He examines himself. His spirit makes diligent search. And his object in relating his experience is—not to glorify himself by a cleverly composed speech,—but to edify his fellow-Christians, to honour God, and to acquire good to his own soul. It has been stated by the *Wesleyan Times*, that "The Methodist people have suffered ecclesiastically as well as morally, through giving a disproportionate attention to experience, as compared with Scriptural knowledge." If this testimony be true who or what are to blame? Not class-meetings, but "the Methodist people." Class-meetings are not designed to supersede or to take precedence of "Scriptural knowledge." Nor, when they are conducted properly, have they the slightest tendency to this dangerous direction. On the contrary, they are directly and powerfully calculated to promote a prayerful perusal of the Bible, and a supreme regard for its authority. In a well-conducted class-meeting, the members are taught by line upon line, and precept upon precept,—not to measure their religious attainments by the standard of their experience, apart from the word of God, but to scrutinize and test their experience by the Holy Scriptures.

Whatever other "Methodist people" have done or

neglected to do, in regard to inculcating the reading of the Bible in connection with class-meetings, the Primitive Methodist Conference, in its consolidated rules, urgently calls the attention of both Ministers and members to this important duty. "All our members who are heads of families, are earnestly urged to read the Scriptures, and pray with their families; and at the quarterly renewal of the tickets, and at other times these duties must be affectionately urged on the members by the travelling preachers."—(Consol. Min., p. 40, 1860.) We think this confessional rule of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, will be interpreted, by impartial readers, as conclusive evidence, that the charge of the *Wesleyan Times* cannot be preferred truthfully against the said community. That individuals have attached "a disproportionate attention to experience, as compared with scriptural knowledge," we fear has been the case. And in religious communities which have no class-meetings, there are members who, while they properly ascribe to "scriptural knowledge" a high degree of importance, seriously depreciate the real value of religious experience. But neither institutions nor entire communities are responsible for the errors of individuals; nor should salutary institutions be abrogated, because they are not perfect in their operation.

3. *Another class of objectors are those who attribute to class-meetings imaginary evils, and then combat the phantoms of their own imagination.* "When it is known," says an anonymous author, "that the bare fact of a person meeting in class admits to all the rights and privileges of the Christian Church, whatever may be his character or state of grace, I think it becomes the duty of every Methodist to examine the operation of this test." However plausible this objection may appear to an ignorant or un-

reflecting reader, it will have but little weight with an intelligent Primitive Methodist. For—

(1.) No man, whose character is openly bad, can, consistently with Connexional rule, meet in class. If such a case exists, it is in shameful defiance of our statute laws and Church discipline. Rule 5, page 3, Society Rules, says, “No person must remain a member of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, if he attends vain and worldly amusements, wastes his time at public houses, buys unaccustomed goods, or is dishonest in his dealings, or guilty of any other acts of immorality.” And of course, if immoral characters are not permitted to retain their membership in society, they are not allowed to meet in class. Rule 7 is a counterpart to Rule 5: “If any member transgress the preceding rules, he must be required to appear before a Leaders’ Meeting, and the meeting must consider the offence, and decide what must be its punishment. If the member complained of shall refuse to attend, to answer to the complaint, the meeting must nevertheless proceed with the business respecting him.” Nor are these enactments a dead letter. It is a standing usage of the Connexion to bring them to bear on defaulters. And as every member, in a disciplinary light, is held to be innocent till he is proved to be guilty, it would be an unwarrantable stretch of power to deny to him “the rights and privileges of the Christian Church,” before he is convicted of a crime. If immoral members be tolerated, this is not the fault of the class-meeting, but of lax administrators of discipline. And it is well known that Churches which have no class-meetings, as well as those which have them, are frequently scandalized by ungodly members, to whom the rights and privileges of a Christian Church are not denied.

(2.) It is not a "bare fact" (in the Primitive Methodist community) "that a person meeting in class admits to all the rights and privileges of the Christian Church." A person is neither admitted into a class, nor retained in it without regard to his moral character. To Question 4, p. 3, Society Rules, "What are the other regulations in regard of members?" the answer is,—*"1. Any person who has an earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come may be admitted to meet in class on trial; but such desire must be manifested three months at least, before he must be received into full membership."* From these rules and regulations it appears,—*First.* That no person is constitutionally admitted as a member on probation unless he manifests a desire to flee from the wrath to come. *Secondly.* That, with a view to prevent the Church's being corrupted and disgraced by hypocrites and formalists, every new candidate for membership from the world is retained three months on trial. *Thirdly.* That no member is constitutionally retained in class "whatever may be his character or state of grace." To these remarks we may add, that erring members are frequently permitted to meet in class, but deprived for a season, by way of correction, of certain offices and privileges which they previously enjoyed. Consequently, it is not "a bare fact that a person's meeting in class admits to all the rights and privileges of the Christian Church." Nor is meeting in class "the test" of moral character in the Primitive Methodist Church.

Other persons object to class-meetings on the pretended ground that "they bear a striking resemblance to Popish confessionals." But we presume this objection can never be urged by any sensible person who understands the nature of class-meetings, and who has a proper regard for

truth. Such a person must know that there is a vast disparity, in several respects, between these institutions. Popish confessionals are private interviews between the confessor and the confessed. Class-meetings are social assemblies, at which five, ten, twenty, or forty persons are present at the same time. Roman Catholics attend the confessional on purpose to confess their sins to the priest, and from him they are taught to expect absolution from sin. Methodists attend class-meetings to state what progress they are making in the way to heaven, and at these meetings, as well as at other Methodist meetings, they are carefully instructed to look to God only, through faith in the mediation of Christ, for the remission of their sins. The Romish confessor presumptuously personates God, and requires the confessed to lay bare the secrets of the heart. Yea, what is still more revolting to modesty, he plies the enslaved wife or the maiden with impertinent and indecent questions, with a design to extort from her the most shameful and polluting disclosures. These are grave charges, but they are based on reliable testimony—on the voluntary evidence of reformed priests, who once acted a prominent part in these secret mysteries of iniquity, but have since come out of mystic Babylon, and revealed her abominations to the Protestant world.

No such course is attempted by Methodist class-leaders. That none of them ever commit an act of indiscretion in the discharge of their official duties, we are not prepared to assert; but from what we know of their proceedings, we venture to affirm that the questions which they ordinarily ask the members under their care, might be proposed in the presence of any Christian assembly, without kindling a blush in the face of modesty. The class-leader has been charged with “demanding an unreserved exposure of a

week's sins and temptations ; and the members, with disgorging before all, with remorseless disregard of delicacy, reserve, and diffidence, all the moral ills of the past seven days." These accusations are complete libels, and entirely destitute of truth, as every one knows who is personally experienced in class-meeting services. The question of the leader to each member, although not stereotyped, is usually remarkable for its simplicity and general import, and is expressed in eight or ten words ; and the person questioned is left at complete liberty to answer at his own discretion. Revelations of personal, domestic, or social secrets, are not desired, and if offered voluntarily, they are not encouraged. A few words here on Roman Catholic confession will not be considered out of place.

Pope Innocent III., in the fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, Canon 21, made confession (meaning auricular or private confession) obligatory upon every adult person once a year ; and that continues to be one of the rules of the Roman Catholic Church to the present day. The council of Trent, in its catechism, defines it to be a declaration by the penitent of his sins, made to a priest, in order to receive the penance and absolution ! The secrecy imposed on confessors is strict and unconditional ; whatever may be the crime of which the penitent may accuse himself, they are solemnly bound to keep it secret under the most severe denunciations and penalties, both here and hereafter, that of excommunication included.* Formerly the Holy Roman Catholic Church was more indulgent. The absolution for a confessor who revealed the secrets of his penitents cost only 2s. 4d.† So essentially and widely

* National Cyclo. Art. Confession.

† On the Penance and the Confessional, by Rev. J. Ross, curate of Pett, p. 58.

different are class-meetings from Roman Catholic confessionals, that nothing short of gross ignorance or wilful defamation can represent them as bearing to each other a striking resemblance.

In the Roman Catholic Church, with regard to auricular confession, the penitent has no choice. That corrupt community teaches the absolute necessity of unreserved confession to her inquisitive priests. In England Dr. Wiseman is the Pope's principal agent. Hear what this agent says, "She (the Papal Church) maintains then, that the sinner is bound to manifest his offences to the pastors of his church, or rather, to one deputed and authorized by the Church for that purpose; to lay open to him all the secret offences of his soul; to expose all its wounds; and in virtue of the authority vested by our blessed Saviour in him, to receive through his hands on earth, the sentence which is ratified in heaven, of God's forgiveness." Again, "this is the groundwork, in Scripture, of the Catholic doctrine, that sin is to be forgiven by the pastors of the Church, in consequence of the institution of Christ, who has herein appointed them as His judges, vicegerents, and ministers; and that to obtain this forgiveness, it is necessary to lay the case—in other words, all our transgressions, before him who is entrusted with the responsibility of the sentence pronounced."*

If the Romish priests lay claim to Peter's keys, why don't they support their claim by working miracles as Peter did? If they cannot perform the latter, why grasp at the former?

St. Francis Xavier, writing to Gaspard Barzée, says, "Examine well the spirit which prompts those who come

* On the Penance and the Confessional, by Rev. J. Ross, curate of Pett, p. 58.

to confess themselves to you. . . Be careful of frightening, by a pardonable severity, him who has begun to discover his wounds. . . . However hideous they may be, however atrocious are the crimes of which he accuses himself, listen patiently, even with gentleness and kindness. Come to his assistance, help to remove the shame that closes his mouth. Do not show any surprise, but, on the contrary, pretend as though you had heard of things much more horrible; and not to discourage the penitent, speak to him of the divine mercies, and thus lead him to a full and entire confession. Do not fear to accuse yourself before him of your own wandering in youth. . . . Give him to understand that his crime is not so grave as he thinks it is,"* &c. What horrible counsel to drop from the lips of a "Saint!" If such abominations are done in the green tree, what is not done in the dry? If such vile confessional trash is deliberately advised by Rome's canonized priests, what gross pollution we may rationally infer, distills from the lips of her fleshly-minded priesthood, in the secret confessional!

In a work published at Paris, entitled "The Priest, the Judge, and the Physician, at the Tribunal of Penance," the author says, "One of the first precautions of the confessor should be to gain the confidence of the penitent who is about to address himself to him. And the means to obtain this confidence, so essential to his future success, is to insinuate himself into his mind at the beginning of his confession, being very cautious not to offend him, speaking with kindness, and showing him the greatest interest he takes in his salvation."† In the works prepared to assist

* On the Penance and the Confessional, by Rev. J. Ross, curate of Pett, p. 12.

† Ibid, p. 11.

the priest in carrying out this infamous office, the subject of confession is plainly and disgustingly dwelt upon. Every possible query is there suggested, so that he is able to apply it with dexterity any moment.* A system which requires such works to prepare its ministers for a ready discharge of their official duties, must be inconceivably corrupt. The natural tendency of the confessional is of the same character. The mind familiarized with shame is rendered insensible to modesty. Hence at the confessional a woman may learn more of human depravity in one hour, than would enter into her mind in a lifetime, from her ordinary intercourse with society. Under Pope Pius IV, in the thirteenth century, when the confessional was in full operation, it bore an abundant harvest of its natural fruits. In a bull which the pope issued in reference to this subject, there is the following passage :—"Whereas certain ecclesiastics in the kingdom of Spain, and in the cities and dioceses thereof, having the cure of souls, or exercising such cure for others, or otherwise deputed to hear the confessions of penitents, have broken out into such heinous acts of iniquity as to abuse the sacrament of penance in the very act of hearing confession. . . by enticing and provoking, or trying to entice and provoke females to lewd actions at the very time when they were making their confessions." What followed? We shall see from the account which Da Costa gives of it in the city of Seville alone. "When this bull," he states, "was first introduced into Spain, the inquisitors published a solemn edict in all the churches belonging to the Archbishopric of Seville, that any person knowing or having heard of any friar or clergyman having committed the crime of abusing the

* On the Penance and the Confessional, by Rev. J. Ross, curate of Pett, p. 20.

sacrament of confession, or in any manner having improperly conducted himself during the confession of a female penitent, should make a discovery of what he knew, within thirty days to the holy tribunal; and very heavy censures were attached to those who should neglect or despise this injunction.* The disclosures which followed were astounding and awful. "When this edict was first published, such a considerable number of females went to the palace of the inquisition only, in the city of Seville, to reveal the conduct of their infamous confessors, that twenty notaries and as many inquisitors were appointed to minute down their several informations against them; but these being found insufficient to receive the depositions of many witnesses, and the inquisitors being thus overwhelmed, as it were, with the pressure of such affairs, thirty days more were allowed for taking the accusations, and this lapse of time also proving inadequate to the intended purpose, a similar period was granted, not only for a third but a fourth time. The ladies of rank, character, and noble families, had a difficult part to act on this occasion."* But I forbear, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which were done of them in secret." Eph. v. 3, 4, 12.

To assert, therefore, that Methodist class-meetings resemble Romish confessionals, is either wilful or ignorant defamation. Should any of our readers dispute the accuracy of our statements, let him consult other competent and credible witnesses. We invite inquiry. Our argument has nothing to dread from impartial scrutiny and unperjured testimony. Class-meetings, like all other human institutions, we are free to admit, have their imperfections.

* On the Penance and the Confessional, by Rev. J. Ross, curate of Pett, pp. 23, 24.

They are nevertheless fraught with great advantages. To thousands of Christians they afford ready means of intellectual and moral improvement, which they cannot find elsewhere. However easy it may be to point out the defects of this institution, we opine it is very difficult to suggest any way of altogether obviating those defects without sacrificing the advantages. It should be borne in mind that class-meetings are designed for the benefit of two classes of persons—members of society and candidates for membership. The principal object contemplated is their mutual religious improvement. Keeping this object in view, the religious exercises at such meetings are—singing hymns, prayer, relating Christian experience, and instruction, according to the circumstances of the members and the ability of the leader. In these exercises there is surely nothing inimical to either the letter or spirit of Christianity. On the contrary, under proper discipline, they are calculated to be highly beneficial, to the Church of God directly, and indirectly to the world.

1. *They afford a very convenient opportunity to Church members of retiring occasionally from worldly society, and convening for religious purposes.* As Christians are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, they ought not to withdraw from civil society permanently, and hide their light within the dreary walls of monasteries and nunneries. But there are frequent seasons when temporary withdrawal from earthly-minded society and secular influences, for the sake of “communion with saints,” is peculiarly desirable and refreshing, if not absolutely necessary. Of such privileges class-members may avail themselves without neglecting the ordinary duties of life.

2. *At the class-meeting the several members thereof have favourable opportunities of forming acquaintance and*

friendship with each other, which could not be formed so readily in the absence of such meetings. But mutual friendship and love is what ought to exist among the members of all Churches. The genius of Christianity is not repulsive and ascetic, but benevolent, attractive, and sociable. Isolated piety is not a full development of New Testament religion. If Christians do not and cannot rejoice and feel happy in each other's company, there is something radically wrong somewhere. The domestic hearth has peculiar charms for the members of a virtuous family. The inquisitive, meddling world is excluded. There is no intrusion. Every face is welcome. Every voice swells the tide of joy; and every bosom realizes the exquisite delights of "home, sweet home." The classroom is, in a peculiar sense the Christian's home. This is the appointed place of meeting for the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. With this select society the ungodly and the sinner are not invited to assemble. In this peaceful retreat the family circle sit each one under his own vine, and there is no lip of scorn, no finger of contempt, no reproachful tongue, to make them afraid. Confidence and affection, like a galvanic current, thrill through every breast. To this holy convocation they often repair, burdened and heavy laden; but here they find rest to their souls, and proceed on their heavenly way rejoicing. The natural language of a devout and intelligent soul is, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." Distance generates coldness and indifference. Intimacy creates sympathy and esteem. And the apostolic injunction is, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Class-meetings have a powerful tendency to promote this glorious object.

3. *Class-meetings are favourable to the growth of Chris-*

tian knowledge. In every human mind the noble principle of intelligence is implanted by our benèficent Creator. But in too many minds this principle exists in a comparatively latent state, like hidden caloric in flint and steel. Let these two inert substances never touch each other, and they will remain dark and cold ; but strike them sharply together, and the friction will produce light and fire. So if the humbler classes of Christians seldom or never converse with each other on the deep things of God, their mental capacities will, in a great measure, lie dormant on questions affecting their eternal interests. But bring them statedly together in close religious conversation, then their slumbering energies will be aroused, and the sluggish intellect will be excited to vigorous and healthy action. The class-meeting is to many a sincere Christian what the college is to the student—a seminary of instruction. Here the class-mates are encouraged to read, to think, and to pray for wisdom from above, as well as to talk about religion ; and their progress in sacred knowledge is, in thousands of instances, delightfully manifest. Of course if their Biblical attainments be compared with those of educated and studious members of other Churches, they may suffer in the comparison. But this is not the fair and rational way to judge on the merits of the disputed point. The proper question is, how will their intellectual Christianity compare with that of Church members who have not access to class-meetings, and whose circumstances in life are similar to their own ? In such a comparison, if we mistake not, they will appear to advantage.

4. *Class-meetings are conducive to growth in piety.* Our present state is one of probation. This state will not terminate till death. In the meantime we are constantly liable to swerve from the narrow path of duty. Tempta-

tions are many, subtle, and frequently recur. Thus circumstanced we need constant help from above. But although the grace of God is sufficient for us, this glorious fact does not render human aid valueless or unnecessary. God commands us to sympathise with each other—to bear one another's burdens—to admonish one another—to provoke one another to love and good works—in honour to prefer one another—to love each other as brethren, and to love Himself with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength. The well-ordered class-meeting is eminently calculated to aid us in the discharge of these sublime duties. In seasons of peculiar trials we are often tempted to think that Providence deals more severely with us than with our fellow-pilgrims. At the class-meetings our erroneous judgment is corrected. There we learn that our companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, as well as we, have to drink the cup of bitterness, and to eat the bread of affliction; and that in our sufferings there is nothing extraordinary. The patience and fortitude of our brethren inspire us with the same virtues, and we are enabled to thank God and take courage. When troubled with gloomy thoughts, how delightful it is to hear our fellow-Christians sing in heavenly strains,—

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercies, and shall break
In blessings on your heads.”

5. *Class-meetings exert an indirect but powerful influence on thousands who are without the pale of the Church.* The religious impressions which Christians produce on the world are effected, to a very great extent, by conversation. By some means an uneducated believer is introduced into

the company of an unbeliever. They enter into conference with each other. The conversation takes a religious turn. The man of God seizes the opportunity of recommending religion to his neighbour. Objections are started which the Christian readily meets. Questions are asked which he promptly answers. Had he never been accustomed to discourse on religious subjects, he might have been perplexed by the first cavils of the man whom he wishes to engage in the service of God. But in the class-room he has been used to express his own religious thoughts and feelings; and now, although he is an unlettered man, he is better qualified to defend and recommend religion than many who have studied in colleges for the ministry, and are invested with "holy orders." Besides, when a person possesses an aptitude for unpremeditated discourse, he more readily undertakes the task of introducing religious topics in conversation. One reason why many Christians so seldom speak to the ungodly on religious subjects doubtless is, because they so seldom converse with each other on these subjects. Mr. Arthur remarks, "We once heard a contrite inquirer after spiritual comfort say, 'It is ten years since I was received as a member of such a Church, and during all that time no one has ever said a word to me about my soul.'" Such cases we fear are too common. And is not every instance of the kind a serious disadvantage to the unsaved world? But in Churches which enjoy class-meetings such an evil can never occur. In the class-room, if nowhere else, the "anxious inquirer" is fraternally questioned and counselled on the things which belong to his eternal peace. Whatever occasion others may have to complain of the silence of professors, *he* cannot say, "No man careth for my soul."

6. *Class-meetings form an honourable distinction between*

the Church and the world. Partaking of the Lord's Supper *ought* to be a badge of distinction between believers and unbelievers. But we know it is not such now, whatever it might be in the purer ages of the Church. We think the nature and design of this ordinance afford sufficient evidence that our Saviour intends none but His disciples or such as desire to become His followers, to share the privilege of commemorating His death, by this symbolic service. But it is equally evident that this honour is enjoyed by multitudes of practical infidels. Liars, profane swearers, Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, frequenters of theatrical amusements, &c., find ready and welcome access to the Lord's table. Consequently, the sacrament, as it is usually called, fails to point out the line of demarcation between even heathen virtue and gross immorality. But we hope and believe that an openly immoral person is rarely suffered to meet in a Primitive Methodist class. If such a case exists, let the offender be dwelt with as the word of God directs. The sooner an overt and obstinate transgressor is turned out of the synagogue the better. The spiritual value of a church does not depend on numerical strength. To invest class-meetings with all the attraction and utility of which they are susceptible, the leader should be.

1. *A person of unquestionable piety.* No natural qualifications or intellectual attainments can avail as a substitute for pure and undefiled religion. He must enjoy the confidence of the members under his care, or he can do them no good. He, no less than the preacher of the Gospel, should be an apostolic man. By example, as well as by precept, he should—

“Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

To each of the members of his class he should be able to

give the following advice consistently : " Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." 1 Cor. xi. 1.

2. *He should be a superior man intellectually.* If his mental standard among those whom he is appointed to instruct is low, he may be vainly proud of his office, though but moderately qualified to discharge the duties which it involves. He should possess a good knowledge of the Scriptures, know how to rightly divide the word of truth, and to give to every one a portion of meat in due season. On the extensive sheep runs of old Canaan, the faithful shepherd led his flock in green pastures, and made them to lie down beside the still waters. In like manner the class-leader should feed his spiritual charge in the luxuriant pastures of Gospel truth and grace. But he cannot teach others what he does not know himself. Water cannot rise, without mechanical pressure, above its own level. Nor can a human mind conduct other minds to an altitude which itself has never reached. We expect nothing great and admirable from the unskilful, slovenly farmer, while the choicest fruits and flowers are raised by the scientific and practical gardener. And in the class which is conducted by a man who undervalues scriptural knowledge, we expect to meet with Christians of stunted growth. Under the management of an able leader, they would flourish like the palm tree, and their profiting would appear unto all men.

But sacred knowledge is not intuitive. It is not the natural product of the human mind. The intelligent attribute in man is not knowledge, but the power to acquire knowledge. The attribute is an element in our mental constitution. But knowledge is dependent on research and meditation. It will not enter into the soul, unsought and uninvited. God will not bestow it unsolicited, nor in

compliance with an idle wish. Nor will he withhold it from the diligent inquirer after truth. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: and out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Prov. 11. 3-6. If the class-leader wish to feed his flock with knowledge, he must search the Scriptures thoroughly and prayerfully, that he may bring things new and old out of the Divine Treasury, and feed every one under his care with food convenient. He must not take it for granted that all hacknied phrases which have long been common-place among Christians, are orthodox; but prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. He should not expect that the spiritual attainments, and intellectual strength, and mental temperament, of ten or twenty members are alike. It is morally certain that in these respects they will exhibit a striking disparity. They consequently require different treatment, just as a number of patients whose ages, diseases, and constitutions, require to be subjected to different courses of medicine and regimen. For these reasons a class-leader should study human nature in its various aspects, and cultivate the gift of discrimination. He should withal be apt to teach—able to express his thoughts with acceptable fluency. We do not mean that every class-leader should be an accomplished scholar, and an eloquent orator; but we do say it is of incalculable advantage to a class to be blessed with a pious, prudent, and talented guide.

3. *He should be a vigilant shepherd.* He should look well to the members of his flock, not only when they meet him in class, but also when they are absent from class.

For the discharge of this duty he is privileged with facilities which fall to the lot of no other man. He knows all the members of his class by name. He registers their residences and social relation. He preserves a record of their attendance. He is familiar with their Christian experience. He possesses a general knowledge of their peculiar trials and temptations. He resides among them permanently. He sees their goings out and comings in. With few exceptions he has ready access to their dwellings. In pastoral visitations these are great advantages. An itinerant preacher, however diligent in his pastoral attentions to the members of the Church, after two or three years is removed from them; but the class-leader remains with his flock. The lapse of time enlarges his experience and consolidates his influence over them. They will often listen to him when they disregard the advice of every other person. These peculiar advantages the leader should not neglect to improve. If members absent themselves from class, he should follow them to their houses, inquire affectionately and discreetly into the causes of their non-attendance, and administer such counsel and instruction as the cases may require. The leader cannot perform this part of his duty efficiently by proxy. It demands his personal attention. In the dark and cloudy day of poverty, sickness, temptation, and domestic trial, on the mountains many sheep are scattered, which no one can recover to the fold if they be neglected by their own shepherd.

4. *He should possess enlightened zeal for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.* However large and flourishing his class, without fresh accessions from time to time, in a few years it will become extinct. Were not one of the members to voluntarily withdraw, should none be excommunicated for misconduct, removals and death would

soon sweep them all away. Besides, the unconverted around him have a claim on his Christian sympathy. Pious and zealous efforts to save the lost are not mere acts of mercy or works of supererogation. They constitute part and parcel of practical Christianity. The fountain of life is open to all. Let every one who has tasted of this vital, soul-saving spring, say to every one that thirsteth, "Come and drink, and live for ever." Let every one

"Who has heard the glad sound,
And liberty found,
Through the blood of the Lamb,"

telegraph the joyful news to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Every soldier of Christ ought to feel intensely loyal to the person, the throne, and the government of his heavenly Sovereign. And impelled by these sentiments, he should endeavour to persuade rebel sinners to surrender and marshal themselves beneath the standard of the cross. The favourable position of the class-leader eminently qualifies him for successfully discharging the duties of a recruiting-sergeant. He is a commissioned officer in Emmanuel's army. He is officially placed at the head of an organized band, which gladly receives every new volunteer into their ranks. In numerous instances, from a personal knowledge of parties, the leader knows whom to invite to his class, and whom to let alone. This is another great advantage which he will do well to turn to account. The example of Moses, the illustrious leader of Israel through the Arabian desert, is worthy of his imitation: "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." (Numb. x. 29.)

5. *Another feature in a good class-leader is punctuality.*

His attendance is as regular as a proper regard to his other duties will allow. Unless some pressing emergency interfere with his engagements, the members of his class can rely safely on his presence. Knowing the value of time, he commences service at the appointed hour. Conscious that irregularity on his part would induce corresponding irregularity on theirs, and that exemplary order will train them to the same commendable habit, he makes an effort to be at his post at the proper moment. By this excellent practice much precious time is redeemed.

6. *He habituates himself to a laconic, pointed style in speaking to the members of his class, and trains them to a similar habit in relating their experience.* The propensity to say too much in class is common; but it must be checked, or the class will suffer greatly. Instead of speaking "things wherewith one may edify another," they will trespass on each other's time and patience. And when the time that can be spared prudently is expired, and patience is exhausted, the class either becomes a drag, or encroaches on other claims. As the readiest way to avoid the evil consequent on such indiscretion, temptation suggests, "Stay away, then you cannot be detained beyond the proper time." Many persons can devote an hour to a class-meeting, who cannot conveniently be absent from their families and situations a longer period. We often hear steady members of society apologise for their non-attendance in the following strain,—“The meetings are held so long, and we do not like to withdraw before they are concluded, and therefore absent ourselves altogether.” Late commencement, lengthy hymns, slow tunes, tedious speeches, vain repetitions, and long prayers, are miserable substitutes for brief and fervent devotions. Where those

evils prevail, slack attendance, lukewarmness, and formality are the natural and common results. But the blame does not rest exclusively with the leader. He ought to set the members of a class a judicious example, and they ought to tread in his steps. Indeed the efficiency and prosperity of a class depend greatly on the private members. The relation in which they stand to their leader is analogous to the relation which subsists between a minister and a congregation. However pious, intelligent, and faithful the preacher may be, if his hearers do not cordially receive his message and heartily co-operate with him, they will perish. The highest order of ministerial qualifications and fidelity cannot supersede attention to duty on the part of a congregation. They have their own peculiar work to perform, which he cannot do for them, if he would. Nor can the most faithful class-leader ensure the stability and prosperity of his class, if the members refuse to co-operate with him in carrying out his benevolent and well-digested plans. If they desire to strengthen his hands they should,

1. *Strive conscientiously to be at the class in due time.* Late attendance creates suspense and anxiety in the mind of the leader, and interrupts devotion. But to wait for the accommodation of late comers is a serious loss of time. By early attendance these evils are prevented.

2. *Attendance should be regular.* Allowance ought to be made for unavoidable preventives; but many difficulties may be surmounted by forecast and prudent arrangement. When absence can be attributed to nothing else than forgetfulness, improvidence, or lukewarmness, it has a depressing effect on the spirit of the leader; and by the law of sympathy this depression is communicated to the whole circle of members, just as one wave in the centre of a pool spreads and disturbs the surface of the entire sheet of water.

Sometimes members stay away from class because they are not often visited and invited to attend. This is wrong. It may also be very unreasonable. The generality of class-leaders are working men. They have but very little leisure time at their disposal. Sometimes they are unusually pressed with the duties of their occupation. They are in trouble or affliction. And they are men of like passions with ourselves. Office neither exempts them from human infirmities, nor invests them with supernatural attributes. They consequently need the sympathy, and are entitled to the friendly attentions, of their fellow Christians. And one of the most effectual modes of encouraging them in their labours of love is punctual and regular attendance at class. This does much towards making their yoke easy and their burden light.

3. *Members should accustom themselves to short speaking.*

Suppose there are fifteen members in a class, and on an average they speak *one minute each*, and the leader occupy the same time in speaking to each member, half an hour is spent in the speaking department; and if *a quarter of an hour* be devoted to singing and prayer *before* speaking, and another *quarter of an hour* after speaking, the entire service occupies an hour, which, on ordinary occasions, is sufficiently long. At the quarterly visitations the service may sometimes be profitably extended to a greater length. If the class be larger, less time should be spent in the speaking department, that time may be allowed for a few of the members to engage in prayer. If any members cannot be trained to pray short, they should seldom trust themselves to engage in public. In the closet they may follow their inclination with less restraint. There, they have no one's convenience to consult but their own. Prayer is not a *penance*, but a privilege. And in the social circle the

privilege should not be monopolised by a few, to the disadvantage of the many. Personal inclination ought to give place to mutual edification. When a class-meeting is held immediately after some other complete service, it should not exceed half an hour or forty minutes, special cases excepted. The bow which is too long strung loses its primitive elasticity. It is better to retire from a means of grace hungry than surfeited.

4. *Class-members should not neglect to stir up the gifts which are within them.* None of them are without one talent at least. To each of them Jesus Christ says, "Occupy till I come." Some are gifted with a talent for music—some with the talent for edifying prayer—others are endowed with both these qualifications. And they should be cultivated by frequent exercise, with a single eye to the glory of God. In the class spiritual gifts may be gradually improved and ripened for useful employment in the open prayer-meeting and the public assembly.

5. *Class-members should watch over each other in the spirit of fidelity and love.* The strong should bear the infirmities of the weak. If one member be overtaken in a fault, the report of that fault should not be industriously telegraphed round the class and round the society; but "ye which are spiritual ought to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." If one member trespass against another member, hasty publicity should not be given to the transgression. It is the duty of the offended party to visit the offender, when practicable, and endeavour sincerely to settle the difference privately, without the interference of ecclesiastical courts. The definite course to be taken is laid down by Christ Himself, Matt. xviii. 15—17. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if

he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother," &c. Our Lord gives no permission to omit this first step, and to pass on to the second or third. The order of the course must neither be reversed nor altered. While the offended party has the privilege of seeking for reasonable satisfaction, it is the duty of the offender to acknowledge his fault, and to gratefully accept equitable terms of reconciliation. And, as a general rule, the several members of the class should emulate each other in everything which is lovely and of good report. If they be ambitious to excel, it should be in Scriptural knowledge, inward holiness, and external circumspection. Such a class is one of the most happy associations under heaven. And of such an association it may be appropriately said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

"They all partake the joys of one;
The common peace they feel;
A peace to sensual minds unknown,—
A joy unspeakable."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MEANS OF GRACE OUGHT TO BE USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

1. What is the Christian Church? 2. Sectarian definitions. 3. Definitions of liberal-minded men. 4. Scriptural senses of the term Church. 5. The constitution of the Christian Church. (1.) The doctrine of the Establishment. (2.) This brought to the Scripture test. 6. Fellowship with a Christian Church a religious duty.

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship."—
Acts ii. 42.

1. To the question, What is the Christian Church? answers are given of very different signification. The positions in which some men stand for investigating this question are advantageous, while the points of observation which others occupy are unfavourable. Human opinions are materially modified by education, family connections, social habits, and inclination. The eloquent Saurin, in his sermon on "The Price of Truth," says:—"We must object further against all those zealous defenders of the Church, who are retained in it by the immense riches they possess there, who judge of the weight of an argument by the advantages which it procures them." He represents them as reasoning thus:—"The Church in which ministers are poor is a bad Church; that which enriches them is a good Church: but this Church enriches ministers, and that suffers them to be poor; the latter therefore is a bad Church, and the former is the only good one." Persons who are largely interested in an institution are extremely liable to be prejudiced in its favour, and are certainly not so competent to judge of its merits as they

would be, if they had no interest at stake. Were it not that the subject of Church-membership is a question of vast importance, and one whose influence will be felt in the eternal world, it would be really amusing to listen to the clashing definitions of a Christian Church, which are given by ministers of the same denomination.

2. Let us listen to Frederick W. Faber, M.A., Fellow of University College, Oxford :—"Now I will tell you what the Church is. It is a visible society, called in Scripture the body of Christ. It is a visible institute, governed by bishops, priests and deacons, baptizing all nations, explaining the Bible in creeds, giving the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost in confirmation, absolving the penitent from sins, feeding the faithful with the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Communion, and continuing itself by creating new bishops and priests and deacons by the laying on of hands in apostolic succession. It is a vessel which all men can see and touch—a vessel filled, informed, lighted up by the true faith. If any man break it or spill any of the truth out of it, that truth so spilled loses its fragrance and its virtue; and they who carry it away are heretics and schismatics, and in the end make no profit of their sacrilege." Strictly speaking this is not a definition of the Christian Church. It is a rambling and sectarian description of the writer's views on not only what the Christian Church is, but also on her magic powers, and the wickedness of those who do not feel it their duty to live in communion with her. The description would come consistently enough from the lips of a Romish priest, for the purpose of defending the extravagant pretensions of the Papal Church; but it hardly squares with genuine Protestantism.

The *English Churchman*, for December 15th, 1859,

gives utterance to the following remarkable sentiments, which are thoroughly papal. Perhaps the article was written by a disguised Jesuit. "To say that any set of religionists are gathered together in Christ's name, while at the same time they are setting up a ministry against the Catholic priesthood, [we suppose the *English Churchman* means the state privileged clergy,] and unauthorized 'baptisms' and 'communions' against the sacraments of the Church, is as unsound theology, as it is want of common sense and discernment." What delicious ideas must these be to the souls who have been dried and shrivelled by the exclusive intolerance of old degenerate Rome!

Similar sentiments are expressed in a catechetical form by Philip Carlyon, M.A., Incumbent of St. James's, Exeter :—

Q. "How, then, may the properties of the Church, that it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, be classed so as to mark and distinguish the Church from other bodies?

A. Into three notes or marks, whereby the Church is known; the ministry, the rule of faith and prayer, and the due administration of the sacraments.

Q. Can we in this country belong to such a church?

A. Yes; by being members of the Church of England, which is a branch of the Universal Church.

Q. Has the Church of England all these three marks of a true Church?

A. Yes.

Q. Have other denominations in England these marks?

A. No other society has all of them.

Q. How, first, are its ministers distinguished from others?

A. By being descended, and by deriving their power, from the Apostles.

Q. How, secondly, is its *doctrine* distinguished?

A. By the three creeds and united prayers, as in the Prayer Book.

Q. How is it distinguished in a third respect?

A. By having the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, duly administered.

Q. What purpose will they (these three things) answer to yourself?

A. I value them as signs that I belong to a true Church, and as marks which may keep me from falling into error.

Q. Such being their importance, repeat once more what are your notes or marks.

A. My *Ministers*, my *Prayer Book*, and the *two Sacraments*."

This is just such divinity as one might expect from Exeter. Let us now see whether these "*three marks*" will bear an investigation. Then

First, as to "*My Ministers*." Are they really the "*descendants of the apostles*?" And do they really derive their holy orders, titles, and powers, from Peter and Paul, or from any other of the apostles? In the broad daylight of ecclesiastical history we unhesitatingly answer, No. Apostolic succession is an arrogant, popish fiction, invented to support the tottering cause of a corrupt priesthood. Hear what the candid Dr. Whateley, Archbishop of Dublin, says, "There is not a minister in all Christendom who is able, with any approach to certainty, to trace up his own succession to any one of the apostles whatever." And be it remembered, Dr. Whateley is neither a dissenting minister nor a disappointed or disaffected clergyman of the State Establishment: he is a learned, highly-gifted dignitary of that Establishment, and an acute

logician. Then, as to the pretended line of apostolic succession, it has been broken again and again. Bede, in his famous Ecclesiastical History, states that at "the request of Oswald, King of Northumberland, certain *presbyters* came (in the seventh century) from Scotland into England, and ordained bishops." Now, if the numerous lines of succession had really been preserved entire six hundred years, some of them, at least, were broken twelve hundred years ago. And being broken so early, it is impossible for the State clergy to trace their pedigree up to the apostles. The difficulty of this task is vastly magnified by the ignorance, vices, and cabals of the clergy during the dark ages. What befel the links of the boasted lines of succession during that dark and dreary night of nearly a thousand years? They were corroded and broken to fragments. We read of bishops who were consecrated when they were mere children—of prelates expelled, and others put in their places by violence—of illiterate and profligate laymen admitted to holy orders—and, in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder, and a reckless disregard of that disciplinary decency and order which are enjoined by the apostle Paul. As Albert Barnes, the commentator, wisely remarks, "It is inconceivable that anyone, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that amidst all this confusion and corruption every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to by men, many of them openly profane and secular, unrestrained by public opinion through the gross ignorance of the population among which they lived, and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained was admitted to sacred offices. Even in the memory of persons living, there existed a bishop concerning whom there was so much mystery and

uncertainty prevailing as to when, where, and by whom he had been ordained, that doubts existed in the minds of many persons whether he had ever been ordained at all. The ultimate consequence must be that anyone who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the Gospel covenant depends on his own minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and this, again, on perfect apostolical succession as above described, must be involved, in proportion as he reads, inquires, and reflects, and reasons on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity." So much for the *first* mark: "My Ministers."

Secondly, "My Prayer Book." On this distinctive mark we need only say, the apostles had it not. They managed to do without it. The Primitive Church did the same for several hundred years. How any man, pretending to even a common English education, can thrust the Prayer Book forward as a "mark" of an Apostolic Church, to us is really surprising. It is well known that the contents of the Prayer Book were collected or composed by fallible men at widely different periods, and did not assume their present form till the settlement of the English Reformation 1661. If a Church thinks proper to impress on herself this comparatively modern *mark*, let her do so. But she has certainly no right to fix this brand on other Churches, nor to charge them with contumacy for refusing to receive this human innovation as an apostolic badge. So much for "My Prayer Book."

Thirdly, "The two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, duly administered." These are not distinctive marks of the State Church, inasmuch as they are common to many different communities. We therefore think we are warranted to classify "these *three* marks" as evidences

of an Apostolic Church, with what St. Paul calls "childish things."

"The Church" is a title or name generally used by the Episcopalian ministers of this country to denote that section of the British Church which is chartered and endowed by the Government, to the exclusion of every other branch of the National Church. In this sense it is employed by Dr. Hook in his Church Dictionary. Speaking of Dissenters he says, they are "Those who, relying on their private judgment, have left the pale of the Church." He means, of course, the State Church. But this definition of Dissenters is neither correct nor just. It is unworthy a Protestant minister, and would come more consistently from the pen of a thorough-going Papist, than from one of the oracles of a community which, relying on their private judgment, have wisely left the apostate Church of Rome. Private judgment is the birth-right of every man. And if State Churchmen do not choose to exercise this right it is nothing to their credit.

3. Let us hear what men of a catholic spirit reply to the question, What is a Christian Church? Mr. Thomas Spencer, M.A., Perpetual Curate of Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath, in his proposed plan of a Second Reformation, says, "In every congregation those persons who consent to take the Bible as their only rule of faith, and whose conduct appears to be guided by its precepts, shall be deemed members of the Church, and shall be enrolled as such on a Church list, according to Article XIX. of the Church of England, which says, 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered.'" As Mr. Spencer recognises all pious and orthodox heralds of the gospel as duly authorised

ministers of Christ, he further proposes an occasional interchange of pulpits between them and the clergy of the State Church.

About fifteen years ago Mr. J. Jordan, Vicar of Enstone, in the diocese of Oxford, was invited to preside at a Wesleyan missionary meeting. Mr. J. accepted the invitation. Strictures on his conduct for so doing shortly appeared in a public journal. The journal, in the genuine spirit of Rome, ventured to assert that the Wesleyan Connexion is not a Church of Christ. In a letter addressed to the editor of the said journal, Mr. Jordan remarks, "Your first position is, that the Wesleyan Connexion is not a Church of Christ. I will satisfy you that it is, in strict conformity with our own Articles, to which you do not refer, and with the same canon, to which you do. Our Article XIX. defines a Church to be "a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.' Now, that the Wesleyan Connexion has these several conditions may easily be shown; for, first, that they are a congregation of faithful men their works do everywhere prove; and I need but refer you to a recent letter of the present Bishop of Chichester, in which the great work of revivalism, effected by their founder and his immediate followers, is duly acknowledged. Secondly, among them "the pure word of God is preached" as may be easily known by perusing the sermons and other writings of their founder, which are to this day steadily adhered to by them as their standards of doctrine, not so much because they were the compositions of the venerable man, John Wesley, ... but upon the very same ground that we subscribe our Articles, because they

are faithful expositions of the pure word of God, and consequently are scriptural. Thirdly, that the sacrament of baptism is 'duly ministered by them according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same,' is admitted and acted upon by our own ecclesiastical authorities and exponents of our polity; for our courts recognise their baptisms as valid, and require us, as ministers, to do the same, by performing for those so baptised, all Christian rites. Fourthly, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered by them with equal validity. For they do it with as much faithfulness to scriptural essentials as they do that of baptism. Thus, then, according to our own article, they have the true conditions of a Christian Church, and must therefore, in consistency, be recognised as such by us."* The intelligent reader will perceive that the arguments of Mr. Jordan apply to other Dissenting communities, as well as to Wesleyan Methodists.

4. Let us now appeal to the law and testimony, and see what is meant by the term church. The English word church is derived from the Greek *Kuriou oikos*, "house of the Lord," which expression, in course of time, was contracted into *kurioik*, and *kuriake*; and hence the *kirk* of our northern neighbours, and *kirik* of our Saxon ancestors, from which, by corruption, changing the hard Saxon c into ch we have made the word "church."† Hence the radical meaning of the word refers to the place in which the people of God assemble for divine worship. In this sense, every place in which the disciples of Christ meet together for religious exercises is a church. But in the present inquiry the term church is employed, as it commonly is,

* Tract No. 30 A. Mason, 66, Paternoster-Row, London.

† Dr. A. Clarke,

to denote a Christian association. In this sense it is frequently used by our translators. The Greek term *ekklesia*, of which *church* is a translation, simply signifies an assembly or congregation, irrespective of its character, or the object for which it is convened. Parkhurst thinks the original word is derived from *ekkalein*, to call out. The learned Mintert deduces it from the Hebrew *kehal*, an assembly, for which the LXX (Greek translators) of the Septuagint frequently use the word *ekklesia*. In Acts xix. 39, the word is used to signify an assembly called out by the civil magistrate. In the same chapter, verses 32 and 40, the same word is applied to an assembly of the people, although not convened by lawful authority. In chapter vii. 38, *ekklesia* is employed to denote a general assembly of the Israelitish people; consequently its proper signification in any place where it occurs, must be collected from other words with which it stands connected. The expressions, "the church of God," "the church of Christ," "the church militant," denote the universal church throughout Christendom, embracing the entire household of faith. This is the true Catholic Church. Of this church every genuine disciple of Christ is a member. In a narrower sense, a national church signifies the church of one nation. In this sense every British Christian is a member of the Church of England, whether or not he is a member of the State church. A church may be endowed and chartered by the State; but, correctly speaking, no individual community, so long as a plurality of evangelical denominations exists in the nation, can be constituted the Church of England. In a more restricted sense still, a church signifies a religious community. In this sense the Baptist, Congregationalist, Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, Episcopalian, and other denominations are Christian Churches.

In primitive times the term church was used to signify all the believers in Christ in a city or town; as the seven churches in Asia Minor, mentioned in the Book of Revelation, chapters ii. and iii., and the churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1. It was also used to signify one religious assembly connected with some specific place of worship, however humble such place of worship might be. "Greet the church that is in their house." Rom. xvi. 5. "Salute Nymphas, and the church which is in his house." Col. iv. 15. In the infancy of Christianity, before the disciples of Christ had separate buildings in which to worship God stately, they used to perform their social devotions in the houses of their fellow converts. Hence we read of churches that assembled within the private dwellings of the faithful in Christ Jesus.

"When one description of people professing Christianity," says Dr. A. Clarke, "with their own peculiar mode of worship and creed, arrogate to themselves, exclusive of all others, the title of 'THE CHURCH;' and then, on the ground of a maxim which is true in itself, but falsely understood and applied by them, assert that, as they are THE CHURCH, and there is no Church besides, then you must be one of them, believe as they believe, and worship as they worship, or you will be infallibly damned;—I say, when this is asserted, every man who feels he has an immortal spirit is called on to examine the pretensions of such spiritual monopolists. Now as the Church of Christ is formed on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone, the doctrines of this Christian Church must be sought for in the sacred Scriptures. As to fathers, councils, and human authorities of all kinds, they are in this question lighter than vanity; the book of God alone must decide." To the foregoing

remarks we may add the sentiments of a Christian poet :

“What is a Church, indeed ?
 Not tripled hierarchy, or throned priest,
 The stolen trappings of the Romish beast,
 Altar, or well-sung creed,
 Rites magical to save, to sanctify,
 For aught that lulls the ear, or lures the eye.
 A band of faithful men
 Met for God’s worship in an upper room,
 Or canopied by midnight’s starry dome,
 On hill-side or lone glen,
 To hear the counsels of his Holy Word,
 Pledged to each other and their common Lord.
 These, few as they may be,
 Compose a Church, such as, in pristine age,
 Defied the tyrant’s zeal, the bigot’s rage,—
 For where but two or three
 Whatever place in Faith’s communion meet,
 There, with Christ’s presence, is a Church complete.”

By the way it may be useful to remark that “the Mother Church,” is neither the State Church of England nor the Church of Rome. The first Christian Church is the Mother Church, if this honour is to be awarded to any one in preference to the rest. The fathers assembled in the Second General Council at Constantinople, A.D., 381, said in their synodical epistle, “we acknowledge the most venerable Cyril, most beloved of God, to be bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all Churches.”

5. Let us next offer a few remarks on the constitution of the Christian Church. On this proposition alone we might easily construct an octavo volume ; but we shall confine our notices to a few prominent outlines.

(1.) We will notice the doctrine of the State establishment on this point. In almost every book, pamphlet, tract, or sermon published by Episcopalian ministers, in vindication of their own ecclesiastical constitution, we are

told that in the first Christian Churches there were three orders of clergy: namely, bishops, priests and deacons; and that there are the same orders in their community; and consequently that their Church is organized after the apostolic model. And this statement is made in as confident a tone, as if the three orders of clergy in their church exactly harmonized with officers bearing the same titles in the New Testament.

Take the following specimen from Mr. Carlyon's Catechism, referred to before:—

Q. What is the first mark or sign of the Church?

A. A threefold and apostolic ministry.

Q. What do you mean by threefold?

A. Having three orders, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q. Why need the ministry be threefold?

A. Because the ministers of God have always been so by God's own appointment.

(2.) Let us now see whether this triune ministry is God's appointment or man's invention. In Acts xx. 17, we are informed that St. Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church. The Greek term *presbuteroi* is here rendered elders; but in the 28th verse the same persons are called *episcopoi*, bishops. Hence the bishops and presbyters or priests are used promiscuously, not to denote two separate orders of clergy, but one order only. The same apostle instructed Titus to ordain (*presbuteros*) elders in every city. (Chap. i. 5.) And immediately he adds, for a (*episcopos*) bishop must be blameless, &c. ver. 7, obviously indicating the same grade of ministers by two convertible appellations. In the second and third epistles of John, verse i., this inspired penman designates himself not an apostle, not an *episcopos* or bishop, but a *presbuteros*, from which word the State

Church derives the title of the second order of its clergy, priests. But who was John? Was he a priest or a bishop, answering to either of these orders of clergy in the State establishment? No; he was higher than either of them, he was one of the twelve apostles, who, as such, had no successors. Peter, another apostle, calls himself a presbyter in chap. v., 1st verse of his first epistle. Presbyters, therefore, certainly is not employed uniformly in Scripture to denote a second order of ministers like that which exists in the English establishment. "A priest," says Webster, "in the Protestant Episcopal Church, is a presbyter; one who belongs to the intermediate order between bishop and deacon. He is authorized to perform all ministerial services except those of ordination and confirmation." But the presbyters Peter and John were authorized to both ordain and confirm. It is proper, however, to remark that their modes of ordination and confirmation differed very widely from ceremonies which bear the same name in certain modern churches. In the first epistle to Tim. v. 17. St. Paul says, "Let the (*presbuteroi*) presbyters that rule well be counted worthy of double honour." That "rule well." Mark this, in the apostolic Church we see that presbyters ruled; but in the State Church bishops rule and presbyters are ruled. We, indeed, believe that bishops and presbyters are identical, and consequently that either bishops or presbyters may be said to rule. Nor are we alone in our opinion. "We have many proofs," says Dr. A. Clark, "that bishops and elders were of the same order in the apostolic Church, though afterwards they became distinct." With him agrees Mr. R. Watson, who says, "The Primitive Christians did not set up that unscriptural distinction of order between bishops and presbyters, which obtained afterwards. Hence Jerome, even in the fourth century,

contents against this doctrine, and says ‘that before there were parties in religion, Churches were governed *communi consilio presbyterorum*; but that afterwards it became a universal practice, founded upon experience of its expediency, that one of the presbyters should be chosen by the rest to be the head, and that the care of the Church should be committed to him. He therefore reminds bishops that they are greater than presbyters, rather by custom than by the appointment of the Lord; and that the Church ought still to be governed in common.’”

Mosheim, the distinguished ecclesiastical historian, speaking of the Primitive Churches, says, “Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known.” From these presbyters the bishop or superintendent was selected. “This person,” says the historian, “was at first styled the *angel* (Rev. ii. 3.) of the Church to which he belonged, but was afterwards distinguished by the name of bishop or inspector. Let none, however,” continues Mosheim, “confound the bishops of this Primitive and golden period of the Church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was generally speaking small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted, not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. And though the episcopal office was both laborious and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were extremely

small, since the Church had no certain income, but depended on the gifts or oblations of the multitude, which were, no doubt, inconsiderable, and were moreover to be divided between the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the poor. The churches, in those early times, were entirely independent; none of them were subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one was governed by its own rulers and its own laws. Nor does there even appear in the first century the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which councils and metropolitans derive their origin." We now leave the discerning reader to judge whether the highest dignitaries of the State Establishment or the superintendents and pastors of Dissenters most resemble the bishops of the Apostolic Churches; and also whether New Testament bishops and presbyters are the same class of ministers or not.

We have shown already that presbyters were originally the rulers of their respective churches. But after one of their number was chosen to be the ruling elder or chief inspector, he was called the bishop, that is, the overseer or superintendent; and the rest still retained the appellation of presbyters. In every Church, therefore, where two or more ministers officiate, one of whom acts as bishop or superintendent, the rest are presbyters. In this arrangement there is nothing peculiar in the two Episcopal communities of this country—the Papal Church and the State Establishment. In several Dissenting churches there are bishops and presbyters in office, although they do not bear these high-sounding titles.

A word on the *third* order of ministers—*Deacons*. In Butterworth's Concordance, edited by Dr. A. Clarke, a deacon is defined "a steward of the Church treasure." According to Parkhurst, a New Testament *Diakonos*,

which we translate deacon, is "*a minister, servant; properly at table.*" (See Matt. iv. 11, John xi. 5, 9.) A particular sort of minister in Christ's Church, whose especial business it was to take care of, and minister to the poor." (See Acts vi., Phil. i. 1., 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12.) Their original number, first chosen apparently by the whole Church in Convocation, for the mother Church of Jerusalem, was *seven*. And they were chosen "to serve tables," to provide bread for the impoverished widows, and other destitute members of the Church, at a time when she had a community of goods. (Acts vi. 2—6.) As a derivative the term deacon signifies to serve in general, and is consequently applied in the New Testament, not only to the inferior officers of the Church, but also to the apostles, and even to Christ Himself. (2 Cor. vi. 4, Eph. iii. 7, Col. i. 23, and Rom. xv. 18.) In the State Church a deacon is ordained by a bishop, but not till he is twenty-three years of age, unless by a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Being thus ordained he is authorised to preach, and to assist in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but he is not suffered to consecrate the elements of the Lord's table, nor to pronounce the absolution or *pardoning* service of that community. "At present," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the office for which the seven deacons were appointed (by the Jerusalem Church) is, in the Church of England, filled by the *churchwardens and overseers of the poor!*"

Let the reader now honestly compare the three orders of the State Church clergy—namely, "bishops, priests, and deacons," with officers who bore the same titles in the apostolic Churches, and see wherein they agree, and wherein they differ, and he will undoubtedly discover that the resemblance is not quite so striking as he has been

instructed to believe. To our own mind it is perfectly clear that the three orders of clergy, as they exist in the State Church, is a human arrangement, without a single example in the apostolic Churches. Besides, in the earliest Christian Churches there were ministerial officers which are unknown in the English Establishment; exhorters, prophets, evangelists, deaconesses, &c. St. Paul, speaking of the gifts which our ascended Saviour bestowed on His Church, says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv. 11, 12.) We do not say that the Establishment ought to have such clergymen and *clergywomen* in her ministerial agency; but if she had, she would no doubt confidently point to them as so many "marks" of her apostolic character.

On the other hand, in the State Church, there are many titles of office among her ministers of which there is no mention, nor to which there is any approving allusion in the New Testament: such as metropolitan bishop, archbishops, archdeacons, deans, canons, rectors, vicars, &c. Had these appellations been scriptural, we presume they would have been enumerated with self-satisfaction, as additional "marks" of apostolicity. The term archbishop signifies *first* or *chief* bishop who is invested with authority over *other* bishops. The first ecclesiastic who assumed the title of bishop of bishops was the Pope of Rome. "About the year 372, Valentinian, the Roman Emperor, enacted a law empowering the bishop of Rome to examine and judge other bishops, that religious disputes might not be decided by profane or secular judges." To this unwise and unscriptural law the bishops assembled at Rome in

378 inconsiderately submitted and strongly recommended the execution of it in an address to the Emperor Gratian. This fatal measure contributed powerfully to the establishment of popery. From the evidence before us we are led to the conclusion that the three orders of clergy, as a mark of an apostolic church, with some men is no doubt a sincere argument; with others it is a childish fancy; and with not a few, we fear, it is a fragment of deliberate sophistry. They knowingly lead captive silly women, subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." 2 Tim. 6., Titus i. 11.

It is an important fact that no form of Church polity was settled by either Christ or His apostles: consequently every Church is at liberty to form a constitution for itself, provided that it does not violate the principles and institutions of the Gospel. In support of this statement we produce the following unexceptionable witnesses and dignitaries of the endowed Church:—

1. Whitgift says, "I deny that the Scripture doth set down any one certain form and kind of government in the Church."

2. Stillingfleet says, "I doubt not but to make it evident, that before these late unhappy times the main ground for settling episcopal government in this nation, *was not any pretence of divine right, but the conveniency of that form to the state and condition of this church at the time of its reformation.*"

3. Archbishop Wake writes, "I should be unwilling to affirm that where the ministry is not episcopal, there is no church, nor any true administration of the sacraments; and very many there are among us, who are zealous for episcopacy, yet dare not go so far as to annul the ordinances of God performed by any other ministry."

4. In the same strain Bishop Tomlin says, "I readily admit, that there is no precept in the New Testament, which commands that every church should be governed by bishops. The Scriptures do not prescribe any definite form of Church-government."

5. Dean Sherlock remarks, "A Church may be a truly Catholic Church, and such as we may and ought to communicate with, without bishops."

6. In *Gibson's Preservative* there is this striking passage: "The Church of England does not unchurch those parts of Christendom that hold the unity of the faith. Hence the folly of that conceit, that in this divided state of Christendom there must be one Church, which is the only Church of Christ, exclusive of all the rest that are not in communion with her."*

7. Archdeacon Paley, although an advocate for Ecclesiastical Establishments, had more learning and candour than to assert the apostolicity of the State Church constitution. These are his words:—"It cannot be proved that any form of Church government was laid down in the Christian, as it had been in the Jewish Scriptures, with a view of fixing a constitution for succeeding ages, and which constitution, consequently, the disciples of Christianity would everywhere, and at all times, by the very law of their religion, be obliged to adopt. Certainly no command for this purpose was delivered by Christ Himself: and if it be shown that the apostles ordained bishops and presbyters amongst their first converts, it must be remembered that deacons also and deaconesses were appointed by them, with functions very dissimilar to any which obtain in the Church at present."

8. What were the views of Archbishop Cranmer on

* Dr. Cumming's Lectures on Tracts for the Times, pp. 60, 61.

the pet doctrines of bishops, priests, and deacons? "Bishops and priests," said he, "were not two things, but both one office, in the beginning of Christ's religion." Mark this "In the BEGINNING of Christ's religion."

9. "We have departed," says Mr. Riddle, clergyman, "to a certain extent, from the primitive model, without essentially deviating from the rules and example of our Lord and His Apostles. Let this be granted. But then, what follows? Certainly, that if any church should depart from our own model, and recur to that of the primitive times in every respect, such a society would be at least as apostolical as our own; and if that any society should make other variations in a different direction, but yet no greater than our own, that society, also, would be equally apostolic, so far as may relate to its polity."*

10. These views are confirmed by Mosheim, the learned ecclesiastical historian, who says, "Neither Christ himself, nor His holy apostles, have commanded anything clearly concerning the external form of the Church, and the precise method according to which it should be governed."

Dr. Maclaine, the able editor of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, remarks, "Those who imagine that Christ himself, or the apostles, by his direction and authority, appointed a certain fixed form of Church government, are not agreed what that form was. . . . The truth of the matter is, that Christ, by leaving this matter undetermined, has, of consequence, left Christian societies a discretionary power of modelling the government of the Church in such a manner, as the circumstantial reasons of times, places, &c., may require; and therefore, the wisest government of the Church is the best and the most divine; and EVERY CHRISTIAN SOCIETY HAS A RIGHT TO MAKE LAWS FOR ITSELF,

* Riddle's Manual of Christian Antiquities, preface, p. 78

provided that these laws are consistent with charity and peace, and with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity."

11. To the above we may add the views of C. G. Finney, Professor of Theology in the Oberlin Collegiate Institution, United States. "God has nowhere in the Bible given directions in regard to any particular forms of government, either Church or State. . . . The particular form of Church and State government must and will depend upon the intelligence and virtue of the people. Episcopacy is well suited to a state of general ignorance among the people."

We think that we have now made it quite clear, that a disciple of Christ may unite with the Church of his choice, without exposing himself to the charge of schism or separation from the Church of his Divine Master.

"Not in Jerusalem alone,
God hears and answers prayer;
Nor at Samaria's mountain known,
Dispenses blessings there.

True worshippers may now draw nigh,
Sinners may seek his face,
Assured to meet his ear and eye,
All times, in every place."

6. Fellowship with a religious community is a Christian duty. The following arguments for Church communion are extracted from my little work entitled, *The Candidate for Heaven invited to Christian Fellowship*:—

1. Under the Old Testament dispensation the Jewish Church, by the appointment of God, was formed of many members, who were united together by the same initiatory rite, and the same institutions and modes of worship. And if any Gentile expressed a wish to be admitted as a member of that Church, and to a full enjoyment of all its advantages, he was not only required to renounce idolatry,

and to live soberly and righteously, but also to come out from the heathen, to submit to the rite of circumcision, and conform to the Jewish religion in every respect. To those who did so, the "Jews allowed all privileges of this life and the life to come." But whoever refused to enter the Church on these conditions, although they rejected idols and worshipped the only true God, they were nevertheless regarded as an inferior class of proselytes, and were not permitted to eat of the passover.

2. And the Christian Church, in its earliest infancy, was a *society* of believers in Jesus Christ. It is evident that the original disciples of our Saviour did not exist in a separate and divided state. Before His death they were formed into a regular society; and out of that society 120 composed a council, and elected Matthias to succeed Judas the traitor, who had destroyed himself. On the day of Pentecost, "they that gladly received the word were baptised" (a ceremony by which new converts were admitted into the Christian Church), and the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And all that believed were *together*, and had all things common," &c. After Saul was converted, when he returned to Jerusalem, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples."

3. The style of the inspired Epistles furnishes another incontestable proof that the primitive Christian Churches were not composed of unconnected members, but were *regularly organised communities*. In those ancient Churches there were different orders of officers; such as bishops, *i. e.*, superintendents, and deacons. But in the sense of the New Testament writers, no man can be a bishop or a deacon to himself. Overlooking and minister-

ing necessarily imply other persons who are overlooked and ministered unto. It therefore follows that the first Christian Churches were bound together by certain doctrines, forms of worship, and discipline. Mr. Wesley, reflecting on the formation and discipline of his earliest societies, says, "I could not but observe this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God had sent forth *preached the gospel to every creature*; and the body of hearers were mostly either Jews or heathens. But as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these catechumens, as they were then called, apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their several necessities."

3. The history of the church, from the apostolic age to the present time, affords satisfactory evidence that in every age and in every nation where the gospel has been successfully preached, converts to Christ have regularly connected themselves with his ministers, and thereby formed religious communities. This has been the standing rule. The common disregard for this rule is an evil which we deplore, and the repetition of which we are anxious to prevent. It will be difficult to prove, that the attitude of one who wishes to go to heaven alone is defensible. No self-dictated performance can atone for the omission of a known duty: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."—

1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. Above a hundred years ago a serious man whom Mr. Wesley had travelled many miles to see, said to him, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember you cannot serve Him alone. You must, therefore, find companions, or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Dr. Finney, the celebrated lecturer on revivals of religion, says, "Others are neglecting some known duty, and that is the reason why they have not the Spirit. . . . One has neglected to make a profession of religion. He knows his duty, but he refuses to join the church. He once had the spirit of prayer, but neglecting his duty, he grieved the Spirit away. And now he thinks if he could once more enjoy the light of God's countenance, and have his evidences renewed, he would do his duty and join the church. And so he is praying for it again, and trying to bring God over to his terms, to grant him His presence. You need not expect it." And again: "Sometimes persons professing to be converts will make an excuse for not joining the Church, that they can enjoy religion as well without it. This is always suspicious. It is almost certain they have no religion. Ordinarily, if a person *does not desire* to be associated with the people of God. . . . it is because he wants to keep out of the responsibilities of (a) public profession. . . . so that he can, by and by, go back to the world again, if he like, without the reproach of instability or hypocrisy."

The Apostle Paul, in an apt and a beautiful allusion to the human body, addresses the Ephesians, on the unity of the Church, in the following terms:—"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint

supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," chap. vi., 15, 16. But if we suppose it possible for the members of the Saviour's mystical body to *keep alive* in a divided state, they certainly are not "fitly framed together;" consequently they cannot supply that measure of spiritual nourishment to each other, which they could afford if they were bound firmly together by the ligaments of Christian fellowship. The lonely Christian "is like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint." His spiritual dislocation retards the motion of that gracious and vital current which flows freely through those parts of the body whose organization is perfect. Let brotherly love be mutually cultivated by the disciples of Christ, and they will be forcibly drawn together by mutual attraction. "It is the nature of love," says Mr. Wesley, "to unite together; and the stronger the love, the stronger the union."

When professing Christians refuse to associate for the purpose of promoting each other's edification, and when they talk about keeping their religion to themselves, it is as if the members of the body should object to minister to each other's necessities; as if the eye should say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or the head to the feet, I have no need of you: 1 Cor. xii. 14—31. Reason, as well as revelation, teaches us that we ought to pursue that conduct which promises to secure the greatest good to both ourselves and others. For our *own* sake we should aim at the highest amount of personal interest which is attainable. And for the sake of *others* we should set an example which will produce on spectators the most beneficial influence. But in ordinary cases it is impossible to thrive as well apart from the visible Church of Christ as

it is in communion with her; and equally impossible to do as much good in a lonely position as it is in connection with a Christian society. No Christian, therefore, should think of living to himself; but, as a member of the great family of God, he should cheerfully enrol his name among those to whom he professedly stands related as a Christian brother. Besides, it is the duty of everyone who believes with his heart unto righteousness, to make confession with his mouth unto salvation. Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." Hence we learn, that it is not sufficient for His disciples to cherish a secret attachment to His person and service, but they must avow their relation to him openly. If the Sun of Righteousness has enlightened you, it is not the will of God that your light should be concealed; but that it should so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and be thereby led to glorify your heavenly Father. The good man, who is a church-member, is like a city set on a hill, which cannot be hidden; but a Christian who stands unconnected with religious society, is like a cottage in a lonely valley. No one, indeed, should make an ostentatious parade of his spiritual attainments; but every believer should, with humble boldness, openly declare himself a follower of the Lamb. "A known public profession of the religion of Christ has, in all ages of the church, been considered not only highly becoming, but indispensably necessary to salvation A Jew wore his phylacteries on his forehead, on his hands, and round his garments, that he might have reverence in the sight of the heathen Christian! with a zeal not less becoming, and more consistently supported, let the words of thy mouth, the actions of thy hands, and all thy goings, show that

thou belongest unto God ; that thou hast taken his Spirit for the guide of thy heart, his word for the rule of thy life, his people for thy companions, his heaven for thy inheritance, and himself for the portion of thy soul ; and see that thou hold fast the truth, and that thou hold it in righteousness.”*

The neglect of one duty frequently leads to the neglect of another. Jesus Christ says, “If ye love me keep my commandments ;”—prove the sincerity of your profession by your obedience. And again, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you :”—a practical regard to all my precepts is the surest evidence of your attachment. And in reference to that solemn and affecting ordinance which he appointed to show forth his death until he come, he says to his followers, “*Do this in remembrance of me.*” “This is a command by which our blessed Lord has put the affection and piety of his disciples to the test. If they love him, they will keep his commandments ; for to them that love, his commandments are not grievous. . . . Those who reject the Lord’s supper, sin against their own mercies, and treat their Maker with the basest ingratitude.” (Dr. A. Clarke.) And it is a melancholy fact that those who manifest a disregard for church-membership usually treat the sacramental table with the same indifference. They have the good sense to discern an inconsistency in refusing to be *numbered* with a Christian church, and *accepting* an invitation to the Lord’s supper. They are aware that this sacred ordinance is intended for the *professed* and *united* disciples of Jesus Christ, as the feast of the passover was designed for those exclusively who had been admitted into the Jewish church by circumcision. “Let no man deceive his own soul by imagining he can

* Dr. A. Clarke, on the Communion of Saints.

still have all the benefits of Christ's death, and yet have nothing to do with the sacrament. It is a command of the living God, founded on the same authority as, 'Thou shalt do no murder;' none, therefore, can disobey it and be guiltless."—(*Dr. A. Clarke.*)

It will be perceived by the careful reader, that the preceding remarks are more especially applicable to professing Christians. We will now urge the subject of church-membership on the attention of *penitent sinners*. If we rightly understand the inspired history of the apostles' conduct on this point, they sometimes admitted members into the church by baptism, who merely acknowledged the Messiahship of Christ, and were willing to be instructed in the Christian doctrines, in order to salvation. (See Acts viii., 12—16, 37, 38.) It does not appear that the converts who are mentioned in these Scriptures were catechised about their regeneration, and received on condition that they could give satisfactory answers; but rejected if they could not. No, they were not taken into the church, *because* their sins *were* forgiven them; but in order that they *might be* forgiven. A single instance does not occur to our mind of the apostles' refusing admission into the church to any person who acknowledged Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, and expressed a desire to become a Christian. Even Simon Magus, whose *sincerity*, to say nothing of his regeneration, is very questionable, was nevertheless baptized, and thereby constituted a member of the Christian church. He "believed," it is said; but his faith was dead and ineffectual. Had it wrought by love and purified his heart, he would not have regarded the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost as saleable commodities; nor would Peter have had occasion to rebuke him in the following terms:—"Thy heart is not right in the sight of

God." Let not the *successors* of Simon pervert what we have written, and use it as an argument for *their* admission into the church. This is not what we intend: nor can such a conclusion be fairly drawn from our premises. The meaning we wish to convey is this: penitent sinners ought to offer themselves to the church of Christ, and the church ought to receive them. In so doing, both parties act in accordance with the usages which prevailed in the times of the apostles. Our Saviour informs us, that he takes whatsoever is done to his disciples as done unto himself. If, therefore, you manifest a desire to live with the people of God on terms of the closest unity, that charity which hopeth all things will lead us to put the most favourable construction on your professed attachment to Jesus Christ. But if, on the contrary, your carriage towards the household of faith is cautious and distant, you fairly lay yourself open to the suspicion that if you really love Christ at all, your affection for Him is but lukewarm and superficial. It is sometimes a subject of complaint, that persons who are not united with any Christian denomination, are not treated by ministers with the same degree of confidence and familiarity as they manifest towards church-members. This complaint has no foundation, either in reason or revelation. We hesitate not to affirm, that if two good men are alike in all circumstances, church-membership excepted, no enlightened minister can sincerely treat them with equal respect. He esteems them both; but the Scriptures oblige him to form a higher opinion of the man who serves God *in the Church*, than of him who serves God *in the world*; because the former is a more consistent Christian than the latter. Sometimes diffidence keeps the penitent sinner out of the Church. He feels his own unfitness for Christian fellowship. And this feeling is so strong

that he is reluctant to enjoy privileges of which he is unworthy. But hear what our gracious Redeemer says, "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted." (Matt. v. 4.) And to every sincere inquirer after salvation, whose name is not yet registered in the rolls of the militant Church, we affectionately say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord : wherefore standest thou without?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

In the proper use of Divinely appointed or authorized means of grace, the Scriptures warrant an expectation of God's immediate blessing. We do not mean that God stands engaged to instantly bestow on a good man everything for which he prays. A few passages in the inspired volume, abstracted from its general teaching, may be interpreted by superficial students as absolute pledges, on the part of Christ that God the Father will fulfil all the desires of those who pray to Him in the name of God the Son. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xviii. 19. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23. These are rich and gracious encouragements to prayer, whether social or individual; but they are not positive promises that every thing which is asked in accordance with the terms here specified, shall be bestowed. These assurances must be explained agreeably with the analogy of faith. Prayer, and every other act of devotion, to be uniformly successful, must first be offered according to the will of God. If means of grace be used without beneficial effects, it is certain there is some defect in the manner or design of using them. "Ye ask," says the Apostle James, "and receive not, because ye ask

amiss." There is some error in judgment that leads us to desire something which, if granted, would be a curse rather than a blessing. We are influenced by some improper motive; but God reads the heart: and He cannot consistently minister to selfish and unholy wishes. In pleading for a blessing which we know God approves, the mind may stagger at the promise through unbelief. "But let a man ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord." James i. 6, 7. These remarks are designed, not to shake the reader's confidence in the promises of God; but for the purpose of strengthening his faith in those Divine assurances, when they are not fulfilled to those who apparently observe the stipulated conditions.

So far as mankind are concerned, the grand object of the Mediatorial scheme is the salvation of the human race. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." To accomplish this object He suffered, wept, bled, and died. In furtherance of the same grand design, holy men were inspired to write the documents comprised in the New Testament. Sundry means of grace were instituted. The most generous and benevolent conditions of salvation were proclaimed, and assurances given, that whosoever would avail themselves of these merciful arrangements should receive the grace which they were designed to convey. Nor is it necessary that any one should live for an indefinite period in a state of suspense, before he receives "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Immediate blessings may be expected by those who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. The present moment is the proper time to

ask and look for promised good. If blessings had to be merited by a process of labour, it would require length of time to perform the task. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. iv. 5. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Chap. x. 4—10.

All the meritorious work essential to man's salvation is performed already by Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death magnified the law and made it honourable, and opened the kingdom of heaven to every believer. At the right hand of God the Father He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Wherefore, He is able to save now, and to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by Him. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Why then not arise and press into it by faith at once? Listen to the gracious invitation, and equally gracious promise, of your all-sufficient Saviour: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." To-day, then, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

But the doctrine of a present salvation, like the kindred doctrine of a full salvation, has to struggle against a host of opponents. All men who believe in future rewards and punishments hope to be forgiven and redeemed from all iniquity, that they may escape the wrath to come, and be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; but only few either expect or desire to be saved now. And rarely are they willing to take the blame of procrastination to themselves.

1. In opposition to a present salvation one pleads, "It requires a long time for self-examination and reflection before evangelical repentance can be produced, and saving faith brought into proper exercise." Some time ago I took up the work of a learned divine who, in giving instruction to seekers of salvation, advises them to "spend one day in self-examination, two days in confession," and so on. But this tardy routine of preparation is too slow and hazardous for an awakened sinner, who is conscious of his guilt and danger, and who sees hell from beneath already moved to meet him at his coming. Filled with remorse for the past, and terrified by the dark and threatening future, he impatiently exclaims, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: make haste, O God, to help me." Nor ought we to damp the fervour of his soul and repel his approach to Christ, by advising him to be calm, and pointing out to him a circuitous road to the cross. The moment we hear him earnestly inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" we must respond, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Besides, the fearful jeopardy in which an unrenewed soul is placed, is a most powerful reason why a moment should not be lost in securing its salvation. If the lives of sinners were insured for a given time, delay within that limited period

might not be fatal. But every man is a tenant at will, and is liable to be removed and called to give an account of his stewardship any moment. Hence, before three days, or even three hours are expired, his eternal destiny may be fixed. Under these awful circumstances, what sane man will counsel him to consume his precious time in preparatory exercises? Why not encourage him to come to Christ immediately, just as he is, and believe in Him for present pardon?

The influences of the Holy Spirit on the human heart are not like the operation of physical laws in the vegetable kingdom. The latter are uniformly slow and progressive; the former are frequently instantaneous and powerful. If a corn of wheat is dropped into the earth it vegetates, springs up, and ripens into grain, by slow and imperceptible degrees, through several successive months. But the production of godly sorrow and living faith are often sudden and effectual. God can illuminate our hemisphere in a moment by a flash of lightning, as easily as he can gradually disperse the darkness of the night by the twilight of the morning. And keen convictions of sin and pungent remorse may rend the heart in less time than is required for describing these sensations of guilt and sorrow. When we are surprised by the unexpected intelligence of a dear relative's death, the mournful tidings are no sooner received than we are overwhelmed with grief. When David heard that his rebellious but beloved son Absalom was slain in battle, he was inconsolable. In the same limited period the grace of God may break the heart of a sinner, and lay him prostrate at the foot of the cross. And when he is brought into this position, he should be encouraged to address himself confidently to Christ in the following appropriate sentiments:—

“Just as I am, I come to Thee;
 But that Thy blood was shed for me:
 And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee—
 O Lamb of God, I come.”

2. Another objects, “Regeneration is a work too great and glorious to be accomplished in an hour.” Why hath Satan filled thy heart to limit the willingness or the power of God to save? For this objection is levelled against God, as well as against man. When men are represented in the Scriptures as converting souls from Satan to God, they do it by an agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit. We admit that they do not operate on the human soul as a wedge operates on wood, or a chisel on stone; for they are capable of voluntary exertion; but God is the only efficient Agent in man's conversion. No man can convert his fellow-man from the error of his ways without Divine interposition; but God can save whom He will without the intervention of man. “Ah! Lord God, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.” And why should it seem a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead in sin, and make the wretched happy in a moment? “With God all things are possible.” Matt. xix. 26. “And all things are possible to him that believeth.” Mark ix. 23.

3. A third objection to a present salvation is, “In revolutionary revivals, many of the professed converts fall away.” Do they *all* fall away? If not, the work is of God. If it were of man, it would come to nought. *None* would stand. It may be expected that in extensive revivals in some persons, in whose heart the good seed springs up quickly, “there is no depth of earth.” Their strong emotions, the rapidity of their growth are ill-regulated and

defective. Others "who anon receive the word with joy," and admit it "into good and honest hearts," subsequently, through unwatchfulness and neglect of their religious duties, suffer the precious plants of grace to be "choaked by the cares of this world." And are there not backsliders among professing Christians who, according to their own statements, obtained salvation in a quiet and gradual manner? How is their instability to be accounted for? We might just as rationally deny that Jesus Christ called the twelve apostles to preach the Gospel, because some of them betrayed and denied Him, as object to revivals, because some of the converts, associated with such services, fall away.

4. A fourth objects, "The work is too sudden to stand." We suppose those who offer this objection, rather question the reality of the work, than find fault with the length of time in which it is performed. They mean the work is too superficial to be permanent; and that although the animal emotions are strongly excited, the religious impressions are feeble, and consequently transient. It is well if these expressions of distrust are not as often the language of hope as of holy dread. An anti-revivalist is disappointed and chagrined when the subjects of sudden conversion hold fast the beginning of their confidence to the end. He flatters himself that he is gifted with superior powers of discernment and is a far-seeing man. He has ventured to predict the downfall of those persons, who profess to have been converted in a revival. But if they stand fast in the Lord his prophetic folly stands exposed. Instead therefore of praying that the young converts may be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, he stands on his watch to witness their halting; and if they openly return to the beggarly elements of the world, he realizes a

secret satisfaction. Whether revival converts stand or fall no thanks are due to him. About fifty years ago my mother, who had long been a member of the Wesleyan denomination, related to me the following interesting anecdote of Mr. Bramwell :—"There was a revival among the Wesleyans at East Leake, Nottinghamshire. In that revival many young people were converted and added to the Church. An elderly member of the society, who seemed to be anticipating their apostasy said, 'Mr. Bramwell, do you think they will stand?' Mr. Bramwell, without offering an opinion on the subject, replied, 'Molly, don't you throw them down.'"

The accession of three thousand souls to the Church on the day of Pentecost was a sudden event. The work was nevertheless genuine and permanent. "Then they that gladly received his (Peter's) word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

5. "In special cases," says Alexander Knox, "it is better that the effects of the gospel are produced quickly, but the general ends of Christianity are better answered by the same effects being produced slowly." God was manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil. But the works of the devil cannot be destroyed too suddenly. Sin is the greatest of evils : and one would suppose that the sooner this master-piece of Satan is annihilated the better. We cannot conceive how the delay of conversion can either glorify God or benefit the sinner.

6. "Individuals," it has been said, "who are providentially fitted to seek religion for themselves, are in general led in another way." And pray what is this other way? It is certainly not the "more excellent way." For, to the anxious penitent who exclaims, "God be merciful to me a

sinner," the Scriptures, it is certain, do not point out a "slow," round-about road to the kingdom of heaven. They reply, "Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!" And in all cases the "quicker" the effects of the Gospel are wrought the better. In no instance can the ends of Christianity be better answered by persons remaining in unbelief and misery. And whether sinners are converted suddenly in revivals, or are brought to an experimental sense of the favour of God by slower and more gradual steps, they ought to be instructed "to seek religion for themselves," since no other person can seek and secure it for them, of whatever mysterious powers he may fancy himself possessed. Who can seek remission of sins by proxy? or who can "absolve" the sinner but God? No man living has power effectually to "absolve the sinner from all his sins," or, in behalf of a fellow-creature, to "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh." Every human being must be "taught to seek religion for himself."

7. It is further objected, "God is not always willing to save." Has He said so? He has not. If there is any unwillingness respecting your salvation, it is on *your* part, not on the part of God. With regard to Him, "all things are now ready." The institutions of the Gospel are so many expressions of the compassion and benevolence of our heavenly Father. They all bespeak His willingness to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the distressed, to strengthen the weak, and to save the lost. Diligently use the means of grace, and through them expect an intercourse to be opened, and preserved open between God and your souls. Then will He make them never-failing instrumentalities

of good. On earth He will supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, and in heaven He will transcend your highest expectations. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

THE END.

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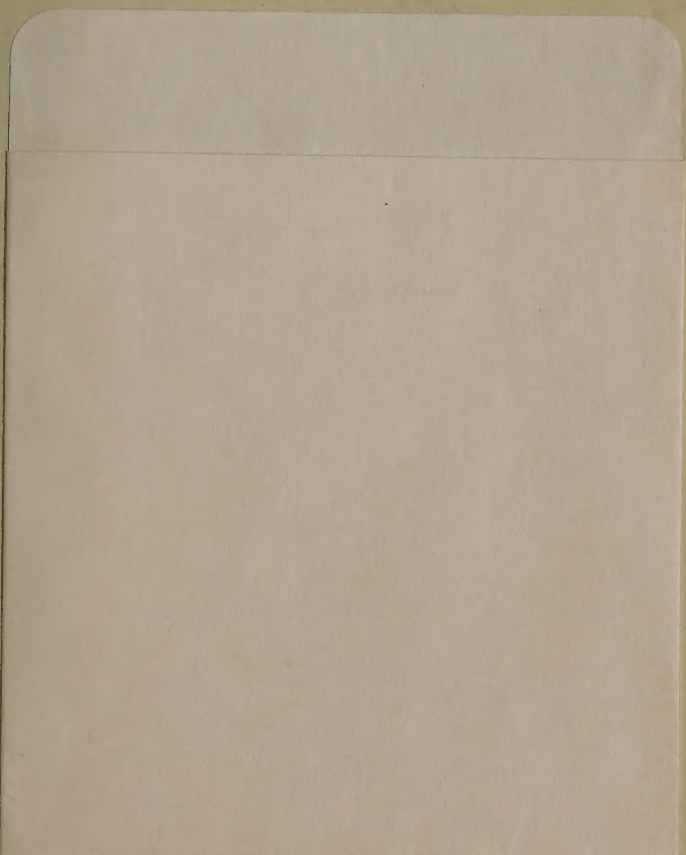
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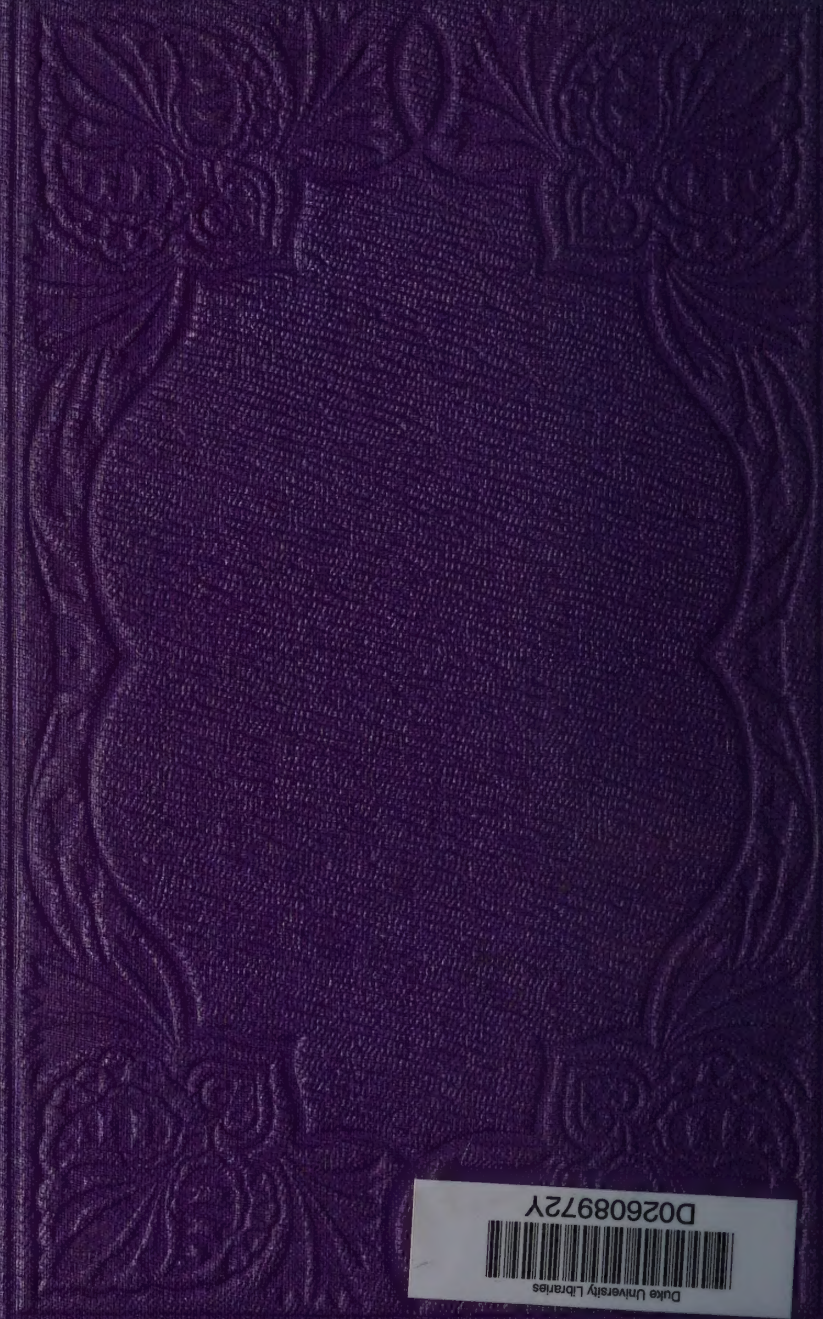
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